CRITICAL ISSUES
IN SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

Edited by
John B. Chethimattam

jeevadhara

A JOURNAL FOR SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

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Editorial

Jeevadhara Centre for Socio-Religious Research held a national seminar on June 4 and 5, 2004 on the Crucial Issues in Socio-religious research. We are publishing in this issue of *Jeevadhara* the papers presented in it as well as the final statement. The question comes from the discovery of sociologists that religions are social phenomena coming out of the basic human need to express the ultimate meaning and goal of life collectively and culturally. What are the basic social concerns in response to which various religions appear at different moments in history? The fundamental problem is why religions that are expected to provide the solutions to existential riddles of life and the meaning of all things that surround human life often lead to conflicts and religious wars. This calls for a dialogue among various religions, all of which seem to claim to speak not for individuals or groups but for the whole humanity. If according to John Hicks all religions are essentially the same differing only in minor details, especially epistemological, such dialogue has no great importance. On the other hand, if what is essential for each religion is where it differs from others, dialogue which implies a certain give and take would be suicidal. The basis of inter-religious dialogue is that religions have much in common, and that they do also differ among themselves a great deal.

The first paper in this issue explores the sociological character of religions. Recent interest in religions was initiated by scholarly research into world literature, which to a great extent focus on religions like the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* of the Hindus, the *Tripitaka* or three baskets of Buddhism, *Zend Avesta* of the Zoroastrians, the Bible of Jews and Christians and the *Qur'an* of Muslims. It was surprising to see how the different sacred books dealt differently with the ultimate meaning of human life and the existence of a Supreme Being. Then the sociologists came on the scene and found that these various documents

went into the social phenomenon of the tribe and of the ancestors transmitting to posterity their faith and rules of behavior. For most God was actually the tribe itself, the larger human collectivity. Human existence is very precarious and people are constantly threatened with non existence. So they have recourse to magic to capture and make use of the hidden forces of nature. But an optimistic yearning for survival leads them to myth and makes them feel the benevolent existence of divine powers that once upon a time entered the universe in favour of human beings. Sacrifice combining both magic and myth is a sort of family banquet in which gods are invited guests, and also hosts who welcome humans into a divine fellowship.

But what sent the different religions in different directions during the Axial period of history, namely from 900 to 200 BCE was the development of human thinking in the areas of logic and metaphysics that raised questions of whence, whither, what and why. People had radically different questions to contend with. For the Graeco-Roman world the primary problem was the constant flux in nature and multiplicity of things and they were looking for a single principle of unity and stability. So they asked about the what of things and came to the existence of a Supreme Being. The people of the Middle East focused attention on the problem of evil, a world created and maintained by a good and all-powerful God, and came to the idea of conflict between the principles of Good and Evil. Man had to enter into a contractual relation with the good God. The people of India and of the Far East wanted to find a solution to human suffering, and sought authenticity in the One-alone-without-a-second from which all things emerged. The various stages of development, through which religions in these different areas of the world passed, bring out the different social dimensions of human life. Religion is an emotional issue, and any challenge to one's traditional practices makes people feel insecure and persuade them to take up arms against the challengers.

The most serious problem that sent various nations into religious crusades and jihads is politicization of religion. Though religion by itself is a political phenomenon leading to the building up of cities (*polis*) healthy 'policies' and civilization itself, distorted and narrowly

nationalistic politics lead to discrimination and persecution. Dr. Rajan Gurukal, Director, MG University's School of Social Sciences, in his paper discusses the issues of politicization.

The challenge posed by the fast changing modern situation and its social demands made on organizational structures and modes of functioning established by tradition is another enduring problem for religions. Dr. Thomas Mampra discusses in his paper the interaction between the positive contributions of tradition and the new data brought in by modernity. Those who ignore history and tradition eventually become their victims and those, who do not read the signs of the times and the new avenues and challenges for the religious faith of humans, will fall by the wayside.

Smt. P. Radhika in her paper "New Religious Movements: A Contemporary Kerala Scene", presented in an earlier *Jeevadhara* seminar, examines certain trends in Kerala that go against the rules of caste and class and seek to revive values of Indian culture and the moral values of *sanatana dharma* and under the leadership of some charismatic figures motivate people to organize centers of mass politics.

The most crucial question is how we can make the critical social understanding of religion to reach the people at large and achieve social transformation. In this area there is a radical change in the traditional attitude. Today in education the emphasis has moved from science and mathematics to computer science and communication, from pure knowledge to applied knowledge, in short from having to being, from having a lot of information to becoming new persons. Dr. Thomas Abraham explains various aspects of this new outlook in education. This brings up the question of the place and role of the modern university in achieving the transformation of society. This will be the topic for the next seminar.

John B. Chethimattam

DR. JOHN B. CHETHIMATTAM

Dr. Chethimattam needs no introduction to our readers. He is one of the Founder members of *Jeevadhara* and has been, from its very start in 1971, the Editor of its section entitled: The Meeting of Religions. During this long period of 34 years, in spite of innumerable demands on him in India and abroad, because of his varied and eminent scholarship, he has been punctual in organizing this issue without fail and bringing it always up-to-date. We profusely thank him for all his services.

As Chethimattam himself wanted to be relieved of it now that it is 34 years, Dr. Sebastian Painadath who is the Editor of the Section: The Living Light, has kindly consented to take it up. Chethimattam will remain on the Editorial Board as one of its seniormost members and will continue as the Editor of Book Reviews. He will be taking on new responsibilities in Jeevadhara Socio-Religious Research Centre.

Chethimattam has a double Doctorate in Theology and Philosophy and is the author of more than a dozen books. He has contributed more than 200 articles in scholarly journals. He is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Fordham University, USA and of Theology at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore. His quick wits could turn to varied topics of common interest amazingly in a short a time.

Jeevadhara has been organizing innumerable seminars on an all-Kerala, and sometimes on all-India basis where Chethimattam played an indispensable part whenever he was present in the country. He is so quick-witted that he could alone make then and there a general statement of a seminar, whereas later several people together had to strain their nerves to do it. His continuing service will certainly be available to us in future.

Joseph Constantine Manalel
General Editor

Social Implications of Religion

John B. Chethimattam

Religion by its very nature is a social phenomenon. The divine command "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" of *Deuteronomy* 6:4 has as its complement *Leviticus* 19:18 "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". God is discovered as the Creator of heaven and earth, Father of all humans, or as the *Vedanta Sutras* puts it, *Brahman* is the one from whom is the origin, sustenance and final fulfillment of all things. A purely private religion, with an "I and my God alone" attitude is practically a denial of God. Religion is, of course, an experiential realization of the ultimate meaning and goal of life. But such meaning is intimately related to one's relation with other human beings and society as a whole. Diversity of religions does not mark any diversity in God nor is it owing to a piecemeal communication of the divine mystery. What is communicated piecemeal is not God. Still, since religion deals with the ultimate meaning of life including all existence the radical diversity of religions is the most disturbing fact of life for humans leading to religious wars and persecution of those who do not subscribe to one's creed and practice.

Religion has a great deal of ambivalence about it. At the same time as liberating people from their passions and leading them to altruism and integrating social groups, it also creates a submissive attitude to despotic power. It also sometimes appears as a private and individualistic enterprise. Often those who are hungry for power make religion a readily available tool to divide people among themselves and to impose on them their will with the deepest possible motivation. For some, to respect other people's religions is a betrayal of one's

own religion, while for others a pluralistic attitude towards religion and tolerance of other faiths is only a practical necessity to maintain social harmony and peace. But the basic reason for the diversity of religion is that in history people approached the ultimate meaning of life from radically different problems and with divergent perspectives and a variety of methods of thinking. Hence instead of taking a negative approach to other religions as a challenge and danger to one's religion, people should take a positive approach to them as a standing invitation to deepen one's own faith and to expand the social horizons of one's religious tradition.

I. Definition of Religion

Religion is something very difficult to define. First of all it is an emotional issue that determines values and attitudes, tied up with self-interest and altruism, self-sacrifice and desire for unending happiness, life and death, which all cannot be reduced to clear cut concepts and formulated in propositions. Though most religions have the idea of some cosmic force beyond, gods and even a supreme being, a God., they often conceive them in anthropomorphic features. Some religions like Buddhism do not consider God basic and necessary, and have developed *dharma,* morality and *moksha* or liberation independent of a presiding Deity. Secondly there are no uniform common notions. Though often mention is made of common notions like unseen powers, the ways in which obedience and reverence are expressed and motivation, on closer examination there is not much in common in the way different religions take these There is not a single element that can be taken as its essence, Different religions take terms like salvation, religious founder, sin and expiation in radically different meanings. Phenomenologically and genetically speaking religion is akin to poetry. It essentially deals with the uncharted region of human experience. When people fell sick, crops failed, or disasters occurred, an easy solution was to appeal to an unseen power that was conceived more or less in the human form, subject to natural human sentiments. Since it was very much a human projection, people thought that like humans it could be brought around through conciliatory practices to take a helpful attitude towards human needs.

The uncharted region surrounds us on every side and is practically infinite swamping us and overruling all others, and its commands are absolute since one's very life is being weighed in the balance. No error could be tolerated in such a situation. That is why throughout history people have done terrible things both to themselves and to others in the name of religion. Caught between the constant threat of non-existence by inimical forces, and an abiding hope for survival, did humans first indulge in magic in an effort to bring under control the inimical powers, and on the other hand appeal to mythology about the entry of gods once upon a time into our universe and their constant availability as helpers. By putting together magic and myth religion emerged as a various rites that were aimed at bringing the human beings and the superior powers together. Thus sacrifice was conceived as a common meal in which humans invited gods to be their guests and the gods on their part were supposed to welcome humans into their company. Only when human thinking got more systematic through logic and metaphysics did people concentrate on the basic problems that were involved, with focus on one's relationship to an ultimate Reality, still leaving a good deal of ground for imagination and intuition.

II. Stages of Religion

Sociology of Ancestral Religion

Emile Durkheim analyzing the religious sentiment of finding the voice of God in the natural threat of death and non-existence combined with a hope of survival, sees in it a sociological core. When one feels the belief and the command as coming from the outside, superior and authoritative, of infinite importance, it is actually the work of the tribe, as such superior to the individual. The tribe to the primitive man is not merely a group of individuals, but his whole world. Hence the first stage of religion is ancestor worship. The earliest form of religion for the Greeks was the sacrifice at Diasia, a holocaust offered to Zeus Meilichios, a deity in the shape of a large snake, in order to placate the Chthonic deities, the powers of the underworld. Then there were the festivals of Thesmophoria, and Anthesteria. They were actually an affirmation of humans' unity with the whole of nature. Though many deities like Zeus, Demeter, her daughter Kore and Dionysus

figure in these primitive cults they are often represented by animals, like the snake, the sacred sow and the bull. The dead and gone ancestors are invited to this feast to be born again and to begin a new life at the great Spring festival. In the opinion of Aristophanes, the old superhuman snake that lived underground and was the symbol of the underworld powers was a type of the new birth because he throws off his old skin and renews himself. The bull was the chief of magic on account of his enormous strength, his rage and what the anthropologists call his *mana,* the primitive word comprising force, vitality, prestige, holiness and power of magic. Mana indicated *themis* what was right behaviour, and opposed to it was *tabu* what was forbidden. One had to learn what was right and what was wrong through *ta patria,* the tradition handed down by the elders. In questions of doubt one had to consult the elders, and when there were no competent elders or a wise king around the way open to ancient Greeks was to consult the departed by asking for an oracle at their tomb. Thus religion from the beginning connected the present generation with the past generation in a sort of family relationship.

The Olympian and Vedic Religion

From this worship of the chthonic deities and of the animals associated with them a transition was made to Olympian gods. It arose from humans' natural desire to assume the *mana* ascribed to animals, and the tendency to personify natural phenomena like heaven (Ouranos), the earth (Geia), time (Chronos), sun (Jupiter) and the like. Medicine men used to wear masks made out from the head and skin of bulls and other sacred animals. In the same trend ancient kings were deified. Here what E. Doutte says about the evolution of religion in North Africa may have a certain universal application: "The God is the collective desire projected"[1].

But according to Herodotus with the rise of Hellenism there appeared a sharp difference between the uncultured primitive barbarians and the Hellenic race, which looked "as more intelligent and more emancipated from silly nonsense". But this new age dawned

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1.   E. Doutte, *Magie et religion dans l'' Afrique du Nord,* 1909 p. 601

by the middle of the first millennium BCE when in Greece the Achaians migrated from North Thessaly with their Olympian Zeus and other gods to the south, and the Aryans slowly moving to the Indian sub-continent produced the Vedas and the Vedic gods, in the Near East the old Semitic monarchies gave place to the Zoroastrian Aryans, Buddhism rose in India and Confucians transformed the whole Chinese culture. Herodotus tells us that some four hundred years before his times, namely around 430 BCE Hesiod and Homer "made the generation of gods for the Greeks and gave them their names and distinguished their offices and crafts and portrayed their shapes". These gods had a common North European character. It was a religion that emphasized martial virtues of a people on their way to conquering new homelands. When they reached Olympia in Elis at the south west of the Greek peninsula, Zeus conquered and expelled beyond the horizon Chronos and many other gods of the Pelasians, the earlier inhabitants of Greece. Similarly in India the Aryans with their gods *Diaus Pita, Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Aditi* and others pushed the pre-Aryan settlers and their local deities to the East and to the South. While the gods of most nations claim to have created the world, the Olympian gods do not make that claim; they only conquered it. They represent the life of the conquering Achaioi who finally found a home in Athens. They did not encourage agriculture or do anything beneficial to the people but simply enjoyed their conquest. Zeus remained the overlord, retained in himself traces of the Indo-germanic supreme deity with names like Djeus, Diauspita and Prajapati; Along with him were Athena, the goddess of Athens, Apollo, the god of Delphi, Poseidon the lord of the sea and Hades the god of the Netherworld, all with a kind of family relationship.

There was not faith in the Olympian gods as they appear in the Homeric poems except as kings of a heroic age. Cut loose from local pieties, they could not build up any strong religious faith, which along with agriculture and arts were left to the common folk... They were intent only on personal glory, and their story had relevance for romance than for the guidance of personal life. For posterity they were simply emblems of high humanity, of a patriarchal monogamous system, presenting a tradition of aristocratic chieftains. The achievement of

this aristocratic religion was a certain purification of the old rites, an attempt to bring order into the chaotic condition of the worship of animals and an adaptation to the changed social situation.

When the Olympian gods disappear from history there is a great vacuum that had to be filled through more rational approaches to the meaning and goal of human life. In Greece the age of the Olympians who were appropriated by different city states, ended with the end of the city states at the defeat of the Greeks by the Persians and the defeat of the Athenians by the Spartans. As Xenophon describes, the news about the disaster of the Athenians at Kynoskephalai reached the Athenians at night and the whole city stayed awake lamenting the sad end of their democracy and reflected on the atrocities they themselves had perpetrated in the past on the people of Melos and other Hellenic cities they had conquered. This created a revulsion against the Olympian religion, which was contradictory to the social nature of humans. The basic question for the Athenians was "what is good?" For a martial people it was victory, stable and steady victory. But final failure showed them that victory was not everything. Philosophers like Antisthenes who felt bitterly the fall of Athens tried to rationalize the defeat and argued that having fought for a good cause was good enough, and that the real good was *arête* valor or virtue.

The destruction of the city of Athens, the razing to the ground of its impregnable walls and the defeat of its invincible navy occasioned a radical change in the social outlook of religion itself. The basic problem was the sudden change in the socio-political situation and the break up of the Greek world. Antisthenes, who was a philosopher from the Patrician circle of Socrates, moves out of the aristocratic environs and starts his school in Kynosarges among the disinherited of the earth. Dressed like a poor workman, he befriended the "bad" who needed befriending and accepted as disciples only those who could bear hardship. More pronounced was the attitude of his disciple, Diogenes, the son of a bad money-changer who defaced the coinage to sell them at a greater profit. Diogenes wanted to "deface the coinage" on a larger scale, challenge the whole past tradition and hold on to nothing else but *arête,* 'worth', 'goodness'. The members

of this school wanted the purely natural life, the "dog's life" (*ton kunikon bion*) and hence they were called Cynics. They obeyed no human laws, because they recognized no city. They sold their possessions and did not give the money to the poor lest these should feel bound to them in gratitude, but threw it into the ocean and led a homeless life in search of wisdom. They lived preaching in the streets, did not "beg" but "commanded" that they be given "bread for their bare livelihood". They thought that the others obeyed their commands because they were still slaves!

On the other hand, the rational philosophies of Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle tried to open the way to a better religious perspective. Parmenides tells us how he was taken by the Goddess of Night through all the cities, shown their glory, and told that all of them were mere shadows and that all that is and that can be thought of is Being. Plato in the *Apology of Socrates* makes his hero defend his position that God alone is wise, and that man's wisdom is to realize that he is not wise. The Delphic oracle declared Socrates the wisest only because he was not wise and knew that he was not wise, while others reputed wiser, thought that they were wise when they actually were not. Anaxagoras of Clazomene openly declared in his books that the Sun and the Moon are not gods but merely pieces of rock! Plato argued that it was foolish for people to pay the Sophists like Gorgias and Prodicus for their imported wisdom, since one could reach the light of the Good, the sun of the moral universe only through the moral virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and courage. He was disgusted with the democracy of the city of Athens supported by Pericles, and the autocratic rule of the Oligarchy of tyrants that followed. His opinion was that good government could be established only if a philosopher were the king or the young king was properly educated as a philosopher. But he found that this was an impossible proposition from his practical experiment with Dionysos of Syracuse. Humans live in a cave contemplating only shadows and listening only to echoes. They have to be turned around to face the fire and the statues that produced the shadows, brought out of the cave to see the real things and look at the sun that made them visible. Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* argued that

the Immovable Mover that moved all things was a supreme Intelligible and that it moved them as the ultimate object of their knowledge and desire.

The Stoics like Zeno, Marcus Aurelius and others taught that humans had the task of actually ordering life according to true wisdom. They improved on the military metaphor. To the good soldier it does matter whether in his part of the field he wins or loses. But life is more like a play, in which each one has his own role and the good man proceeds to act out his role to the best of his ability, accept the order of the cosmos and obey the order given him by his commander. Plato himself stated that though it were better for man to be free from the body, one could not commit suicide since the soul was put into the body by gods for its training to prove its character. Similarly Epicurus born of poor parents in a colony of Samos in 341BCE emphasized wisdom and simplicity of life. Driven out of the colony his family took refuge in Colophon and while helping his parents and struggling against bad health he developed his philosophy starting from the realization that humans torture themselves with unnecessary fears. They should fear no evil either from humans or from God. Evil from humans can be avoided by justice, and God is a blessed being who inflicts no evil. Against the Cynics he argued that life is worth living, and against the stoics that *arête* is good not for itself but because it produces happy life, blessedness or pleasure. His philosophy became so popular that his disciples bought for him a house and garden in Athens, where he lived till his death, a simple life with his friends and disciples taking neither flesh nor wine.

In India the age of the Vedas and Epics was followed by the Upanishads, Buddhism and Jainism. For the East the problem was not the instability and multiplicity of things as for the Greeks, but the meaning of human suffering. So the question they posed was "Whence are all things? What is their authentic condition?" Siddhartha Gautama was deeply disturbed by the sight of a dead man being carried to cremation and a sick man lying by the wayside. The sixty three schools of metaphysics did not give him a satisfactory answer, nor did the life of austerity he lived for a time with ascetics. He became a Buddha

by the realization that the whole phenomenal universe was empty. Similarly Vardhamana Mahaveera came forward as the twenty fourth *tirthankara,* the guide who could lead people beyond the troubled ocean of present existence to a life beyond all trouble, to the fullness of consciousness and power. The various Upanishads presented the teachings of individual masters explaining how people could find authenticity and happiness in the midst of present suffering, by realizing God as the Self of one's own self. "Filled with God are all these things that move on the face of the earth; if you renounce them you can enjoy them" states the *Isavasyopanishad; Brahman* is the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear, the speech of speech and that one object of meditation in whom all things are seen in their authenticity, said the *Kenopanishad.* In the *Kathopanishad* to Naciketas asking of Death the meaning of life comes the answer: "Smaller than the small, greater than the great is this Self hidden in the heart of every being; Realizing it you will get beyond all suffering".

For peoples of the Middle East including the Hebrews, the Sumerians, the Persians and the Babylonians, the basic problem was the presence of evil in a world created and maintained by a good and all-powerful God. Hence for them the question was how to escape evil and maintain their fidelity to God. The evil was the work of the devil, the adversary, the tempter who sowed darnel in a field of wheat planted by God, the good farmer. The principle of evil could not prevail; he could only create some problems to faithful believers, tempt their fidelity. God was thought of in the image of those war lords who after conquering a country entered into a sort of benevolent treaty with its people demanding only their loyalty so that he could follow his victory with beneficial works for their good. Marduk was the god who defeated Tiamat, the sea dragon, cutting her body into two, one part forming the heaven and the other the earth. For Hebrews, Yahweh was the creator of heaven and earth who had still to contend with Chaos and bring about order and beauty placing the first human couple in charge of the world. But when they violated his command he cast them out of the Garden of happiness promising them, however, liberation in future.

III. Convergence of Perspectives

By the time Jesus came to the scene there was a convergence of cultural and religious perspectives. With the break up of Greek city states, the rise of Macedon and the adventure of Alexander to the East smashing up Persian and Babylonian empires right into India there came about a certain fusion of religious cultures. Israel was a nation at the crossroads of cultural movements. The divergent movement of religions started at the beginning of the Axial period around 900 BCE was definitely reversed by the 2nd century BCE... Emperor Asoka who disillusioned by the bloodshed caused by his military exploits embraced Buddhism, reversed the course of Alexander by starting a *dharmavijaya,* conquest of the world for righteousness sending Buddhist missionaries even to the confines of the Roman empire. The Roman General Vespesian before he became emperor visited Mount Carmel which was sacred to the cult of Ashtaroth. Eastern mysticism in various forms of cult of Mitra, Demeter, Ishtar, Isis and Osiris became popular in the Graeco Roman world. In 206 BCE a peasant movement under the leader called Liu Bang with the title of Han came into power in China, unified the whole country, provided a coherent politico-religious ideology and helped the westward movement of Confucianism through the silk route already opened by the Western emperors. At the time of Jesus' birth Israel had become firmly integrated into Roman political system. Alexander and his generals had helped the spread of Greek language and Greek culture from Spain to India.

Christianity was able to accept whatever was good in the various religions in the context, integrate them all in an intimately personal relationship of humans with God and also openly criticize what was wrong in them. The very idea of divine Revelation was not so much a communication of information about God, as what was accomplished in history by the divine intervention. In making these self-disclosures of God intelligible to people in different situations the cultural expressions of the different religions had a positive role to play. As far as Judaism was concerned, Christianity did not come from the outside as another religion, but was a reform movement within the Judaic tradition along with several other movements like it. Of course,

there were several movements of social unrest and resistance groups in Judaism against the Roman occupation of the country, most of them violent. There were also other movements of reform such as those of the Essenes, who advocated non-violent forms of resistance against the ruling establishment and its corruptions. But the call of John the Baptist and of Jesus to fellow Israelites was for repentance over their own sins, since the Kingdom of God was at hand. The main thrust of Jesus' reform was that he saw a deeper meaning in the commandments of the Torah and the salvation offered by God to all. The Sadducees recognized only the five books of Moses as authoritative Scripture, rejected the prophets, and denied resurrection. The Pharisees who emerged as the dominant interpreters of Scripture drew principally upon a body of tradition handed down orally and insisted principally on their external fulfillment. Jesus told them, that man was not for the Sabbath, but that Sabbath was for man. All the laws were included in the law of love: One had to love God with one's whole heart and whole soul and with one's whole strength and love one's neighbor as oneself. He pointed out that it was not enough to avoid murder; that any insult or injury to another human being was sinful. Not only adultery but also lust was forbidden. One could not divorce one's partner in marriage for any reason, since marriage was an institution ordained by the Creator himself. It was not enough that one fulfilled one's oaths, situations that would call for oaths had to be avoided. All acts of revenge were forbidden. One had to love one's enemies.

Christianity took over a great deal from other religions too. John the Baptist and some of the disciples of Jesus were sympathetic to the new spiritual outlook of the Cumran community. That the Church was inaugurated on the day of Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles was in agreement with the practice of the Essenes who admitted new members on the day of Pentecost. In the twenty seven books of the New Testament there are almost as many different christologies explaining the place and role Jesus in Christian faith conforming to the actual needs and religious concerns of each particular community of believers. There was no open criticism of other religions except of those who practiced magic. The statement that the people who came to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost

hearing the apostles preach in their native tongue understood them in their own languages is symbolic of the fact the Gospel was easily intelligible to all of them. Jesus and his disciples who took up the style of poverty and homelessness of the Cynics did not produce any surprise among the people, even the Jews for whom material wealth was a sign of the blessing of God. When Christianity spread among the Greeks the Biblical morality that was too anthropomorphic and contractual was replaced by the rationally argued moral system of the Stoics. Following the example of Philo of Alexandria who through the use of the Greek philosophy made the Biblical concepts of word and spirit intelligible to the Greeks, early Christian thinkers like Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who were familiar with Greek and Eastern religions, freely used their philosophies as a preparation for the Gospel. They used Greek mystical ideas to explain the inner experience of God. The 'Enneads' of Plotinus became almost a classical text book for Christian mystics.

Conclusion

Today religions are entering a new Axial Period of mutual understanding and collaboration as members of the one religious history of humanity. Though they are not all saying the same thing, every one of them is trying to interpret faith, God's free gift to all his children, There is no guarantee, however, that they all interpret this divine gift correctly or translate it into life faithfully. So there is need for an ongoing dialogue including both mutual criticism as well as self-criticism. Still they are the common heritage of all people. They have a great deal to learn from each other. With the present day change in consciousness the traditional institutions are in crisis. This dissatisfaction with institutions is particularly evident in the perception of the government of religions. The abuse of money and authority by those at the head of religions is the greatest scandal in the world today. So there is the need for various religions to come together to promote a charismatic sort of religious government. Today there is a new consciousness concerning sin; from the past focus on individual acts by which one broke the commandments today attention has shifted to institutional sin. Religions themselves are guilty of this social sin, which includes unjust treatment of workers, discrimination against

women, and certain classes of people. Religions themselves have to become conscious of this cry for justice raised against them[2].

Another important area that calls for the collective consciousness of world religions is the approach to Scriptures. For example a purely scholarly approach to the Bible through the application of critical methods have done more harm than good. Thus after 150 years of research into the quest for an exact biography of historical Jesus is today at a dead end. Here Western scholarship has to learn from Eastern wisdom. Buddhadasa, an eminent Buddhist master of Thailand said, "Christians would get enlightenment if they knew how to read their own scriptures". The books of Scripture were not written to provide historical information. One has to distinguish between knowledge which is conceptual, and wisdom which is supraconceptual. Religions can do justice to the social reality of faith not by bringing divine communication down to the level of mass media journalism, but only by leading people to the higher kind of understanding, which is in the form of a collective understanding.

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2.   cf. William Johsron, *"Arise My Love..." Mysticism for a New Era,* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 3rd printing, 2000, p. 24.

Religion and Secularism:
A Conceptual Reconsideration

Rajan Gurukkal

Long ago it was settled on what would belong to Caesar and what to God. History had witnessed the heated debate over the question of superiority between the king and the church before the two came to terms with each other. The conflict began ever since religion got organised as the church capable of staking claim to power, a domain that the state considered its monopoly. So much so, the conflict began with the attempts of the state to control the church and its Episcopal order. Finally the clash got sorted out leaving each its due delimited as the sphere of the church (religious) and the sphere of the state (secular) respectively. However, the clashes did continue over the ages often covertly and at times overtly, leading either to the convergence or to the divergence of the two on the basis of the degree of domination of one over the other.

There are theocratic and secular states even today, the former though a few in number under the structure of monarchy and the latter mostly under that of democracy. There are a few secular dictatorships as well. Nevertheless, the overall change across the world being towards diffusion of power from the ruler to the people, there is a shift from autocratic theocracy to theological democracy and from secular democracy to communal democracy pushing real democracy away. It is the context of growing communalisation of democracy in India, a process that remained inherent to democratisation in the Country, which necessitates the present attempt at a conceptual reconsideration of the distinction between the religious and the secular[1].

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1.   For details of the historical background see, Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in*

A serious rethinking prompts us to assert that being religious is a personal and private affair as distinguished from being political, which is essentially a social and public affair. Political relates to organised public actions aiming social progress beyond differences in terms of narrow identities like tribe, race, caste, religion, culture, region, language etc. They are actions triggered by justice and guided by ideological presuppositions founded on deeply accessed knowledge about social relations and processes entrenched by structures of domination and subjection. Knowledge is power manipulated and social structurally acclimatised. So do the individuals who behave according to the norms imposed by the social structure. Under normal conditions both knowledge and individuals help reproduction and perpetuation of the social structure with all its unjust relations. To be political hence presupposes to be capable of breaking away from the clutches of social structurally imposed norms, and to be dissenting and protesting against them by mobilising the people. This is easier said than done, for one has first to critically approach knowledge and access its socially useful dimension in order to make oneself political, which involves an encounter with one's own mind-set[2]. The emancipated mind then drives critical knowledge to people for realising collective efforts for social change. This is called political practice, an act that is out and out collective and common goal oriented with interests never to have anything to do with selfishness. It is taking theory to practice. In short, politics is praxis intervention - an emancipating struggle against power - aiming social transformation[3].

Modern India, OUP, New Delhi, 1990. pp. 10-23. Also Ashghar Ali Engineer, *Communalism and Communal Problem in India,* Ajkanta Books, New Delhi, 1985. pp. 13 ff.

2. The concept of *Habitus* as enunciated by Pierre Bourdieu is relevant here. *Habitus* is the structuring principle of the social structure that each individual internalises in the process of socialisation. See, P. Bourdieu, *An Introduction to the theory of Practice,* London, 1977. Also, his *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology,* Stanford, 1989.

3. See the relevent discussion in P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* Stanford, 1990. pp. 22-34.

Religion both as a compendium of ethical postulates guarded by devotion and as a system of institutionalised priesthood, is confined to the domain of faith. It is not political. However, religion before its institutionalisation into the church system and priestly hierarchy was essentially political. Any mass religion had a political beginning. Prophets were political in the sense that they were emancipators who spearheaded struggles against corrupt power and unjust society. They were invariably radical in their words as well as deeds. Theirs was also a kind of praxis intervention though in the place of theory it was intuitively accessed and ethically driven knowledge of what it sought to carry forward to action. However, as its course was essentially that of an individualistic enterprise, though indeed oriented to the cause of social transformation, Prophets' actions could be political only of a meteoric dimension. Its political fire could not catch on triggering any mass movement for a radical social change, for the social system contained it by keeping the mass subsumed by the stories of the mystery and miracles around the saviour Prophets[4]. Politics thus departed to religion seeking to organise people into individuals of faith accepting each one's condition, good or bad, as god-given. This insertion of people into religion blocking critical thought precluded mass initiatives for the social realisation of what the Prophets preached.

However, there are striking differences about the meanings that the contemporary world attributes to the two terms: politics and religion. The meaning of the term politics, which dominates today is just the opposite of what it theoretically signifies, for it means actions relating to state-power at the macro level and transactions of elitist party-power at the micro level, which in effect tends to be individualistic and selfish in contrast to social and generous. Similarly, the meaning of the term religion, which dominates today, is a feeling of sectarian oneness under the institutional establishments and priestly order rather than scriptures and Prophets, of course with the questions of wealth and power always held foremost. Hence there exist intense forms of

4.   It is relevant here to recall the insights of Bourdieu. See his discussion of the genesis and structure of the Religious Field in Craig Calhoun ed. *Comparative Social Research,* London, 1991.

denominational divisiveness and sectarian differences within one and the same religion, making it only narrowly different from party politics. Both attract their following through sentiments of factional discrimination. What the contemporary world consider as politics or religious beyond its rhetoric are therefore equally non-political, a mind-set that makes people uncritically accept social reality and remain politically disengaging.

This theoretical closeness of what the people today differentiate between politics and religion has enabled the two to interchange their strategies of mobilisation - a political party accepting the identity of caste or religious sect as the sentiments of mobilisation and a religious group banking on party sentiments. What gets constituted in the process is communalism, a feeling that people belonging to a religion have common social, economic and cultural interests. It is only when communalism comes to the open by eating away the public sphere that people realise the need for separation of the political from the religious. This is the context of the redefinition of the religious and political on the one side and the secular and communal on the other.

The secular is the space that emerged out of the conflicts between the church and the state for power, sorting out what is due to each other in the form of two regimes of power and authority exercised over the people but in relation to their two distinct identities viz., the religious and the political respectively. The political became the monopoly of the state and the religious that of the church. It is against this historical background of Europe that we make sense of secularism. Secularism maintains that religion should not enter politics. It insists that religion should keep off from economic affairs, education, and socio-cultural aspects of life too, because it considers religion personal and private. At the same time it is not altogether opposed to religion. So a secular nation is to be neutral to religious matters. In a nation of multiple religions the Government should have a uniform approach towards all religions, even atheism and should treat all individuals alike with no discrimination of caste, creed or religion. In the specific context of India secularism should be understood as just the opposite of communalism according to Gandhiji.

Jawaharlal Nehru insisted on puting Gandhiji's words of secularism to practice and to a great extent he succeeded in the venture. But his

successors under the pretext of secularist neutrality towards religions allowed the various tools of the state apparatus to pamper them one after the other and inadvertently strengthened the historically contingent process of communalisation of democracy. Under the pressure of vote bank strategies they played the knots of religious identities, which skewed the growing secular outlook of the state to impairment over the decades. The strategies on the one side caused to weaken secularism and on the other to heighten the historically widening communal divide.

The Country is very much under the threat of communal riots today[5]. At this juncture it is of utmost importance to theoretically resuscitate the meaning of secularism and politics[6]. We have to take critical knowledge to the people. Needless to say that it is essential for a social scientist to try and subvert the communalist mode of thinking by resorting to strategies of conceptual recuperation of the weakened secularism and the depoliticised party politics. People should be trained in the cognitive process of critical self-reflection enabling them to incessantly examine and re-examine their passions and values through a series of questions directed to them[7]. They have to understand the nature and social mechanisms of their own mind-set or biases that persistently depoliticise and communalise them.

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5.   For details, see Ashghar Ali Engineer, *Communal Violence in Post-Independent India,* Orient Longman, Mumbai, 1984. Also his, *Communalism and Communal Problem in India,* Ajkanta Books, New Delhi, 1985 and *Lifting the Veil Communal Violence and Communa Harmony in Contemporary India,* Orient Longman, Mumbai, 1994.

6.   For conceptualisation see, Martin D., 1978, *A General Theory of Secularization,* Oxford, Blackwell. Also Ashghar Ali Engineer, *State Secularism and Religion,* Ajanta Books, New Delhi, 1998. Ashghar Ali Engineer, *Communal Challenge and Secular Response,* Shipra Publications, New Delhi, 2003.

7.   The concept of self reflexivity is elaborated in P. Bourdieu et al. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology,* Chicago University Press, 1992.

Relation between Tradition and Modernity in the Religion of the Future

Thomas Mampra

1.0 Introduction

First of all I would like to congratulate the Jeevadhara Centre for selecting the theme 'Critical Issues in Socio-Religious Research' as the general theme of the Seminar. As it is always the case JDSR has felt the pulse of scholars working in the field of socio-religious research and rightly identified some of the basic questions that demand a lot more clarification, completion and possibly correction. I am grateful to the organizers for inviting me to share some of my thoughts on the Relation between Tradition and Modernity in the Religion of the Future. I do not pretend to be able to do full justice to the topic within the contours of the paper. First I shall briefly touch upon the premises related to the Religion of the Future and secondly we shall look into certain aspects of the Relationship between Tradition and Modernity in the emergence of the Religion of the Future.

2.0 Religion of the Future

2.1 Certain Premises

Students of the Scientific Study of Religions have noted some recent trends taking shape which may have an impact on the religion of the future. A very important factor in this direction is a growing awareness of a certain incompleteness of one's religion and culture and a consequent readiness to be open out to the essentials of other cultures and religions.

2.1.1. Scientific Study of Religion

One wonders whether Rudolf Otto and others of the Religions Wissnschaft School were aware of the impact their scientific study of religions and religious experience would have on the Religion of the Future. No doubt, this possibility was certainly latent in the nature of the scientific study of religion. The sustained interest of generations of scholars in the scientific study of religion and in the comparative study of religions, and finally the encounter between living religions in the 20th Century accelerated the emergence of the question of the study on the religion of the future. In a personal discussion with Bishop John AT Robinson, the then professor of New Testament Studies at the university of Cambridge, England, the Bishop told me that after his tour of India delivering the Teape Lectures and discussion with Indian theologians, he was all the more convinced that 'Truth is two eyed'[1]. In other words he was convinced that the integral view of Truth was a combination or synthesis of both the Eastern and Western points of view on Truth[2]. That forthright acknowledgement of 'Truth as two-eyed', or that the western perception of Truth is to be complimented by the Eastern perception of the same may not be a surprise for Indian ears; however, it certainly was for the western world, although, in fact, it came from a person who earlier stunned western theological circles with his much acclaimed book *Honest to*

1.   When Bishop Robinson published the Teape Lectures, the book was entitled "Truth is Two-eyed", (London, S.C.M Press), 1979.

2.   In the Preface to the book Robinson write: "But this more recent journey of the spirit has made me realize how 'one eyed' the constraints of our Western education and cultural conditioning have made us. There are three ways (at least) in which I have found that being forced as a Christian from the West to look afresh through Eastern eyes can change and expand one's vision.

The first comes as a correction to a predominantly one-eyed approach to reality and truth in general... Secondly, to plead for a two-eyed vision of reality carries with it a challenge, explicitly to any kind of exclusiveness and implicitly to any claim to uniqueness.... Finally, there is the less threatening, though equally stretching, demand to allow a wider vision not merely to correct but also to complement one's own rather parochial faith - in other words, to make it more catholic". (Ibid. Pp.viii-x)

God^3. The trend of God-talk and theological thinking in motion through those books and a few others, was, it would seem, symptomatic of a new wave of thinking and talking of God, sweeping the English-speaking world during the dying decades of the 20th century, opening up new possibilities for discussion on the Religion of the future.

2.1.2. The worlds Unborn Soul

A second factor which some serious students of Religion have considered is the need of and expectation of the emergence of a world-spirit which will support the slowly evolving world community and possibly a world culture. In one of his important books *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*[4], published more than half a century ago, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan discussed the question of 'The World's Unborn Soul'. Writing at a time when world wide atheistic communism and God-negation were systematically cultivated by the Soviet Union and its East European satellite countries, Radhakrishnan dared to talk and write extensively on the Future of Religion and the Religion of the Future. He dealt extensively with the emergence of a gradually unifying one-world consciousness, and evolving world community and a world culture, which today many take for granted, giving it a socially acceptable and seemingly innocuous name globalization. As an insightful student of philosophy and the history of religions and culture he noted that the different cultures of the world were supported and to some extent guided by a religion of its own. The Greek, Chinese and Indian cultures are some examples. Following that logic he used to hold that the emerging world culture, whatever shape and form it would eventually takes, should have a religion to support it. The question he posed was about the nature of that religion of the future would be, and which of the existing important religions was fit to be promoted to that pedestal. If sixty years ago the question regarding the religion of the Future sounded to be a futuristic probe, today the question is much more important and a lot more real as we live and work in a largely integrated, though strangely amorphous world.

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3. John A. T. Robinson, Honest to God, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), 1963.

4. Radhakrishnan S, Eastern Religion and Western Thought, (London: Allen and Unwin), 1948.

2.1.3. *Student Revolt of the Sixties and Seventies in Europe and of the Eighties in China*

A third factor which I would like to consider in this connection is the new atmosphere of challenge or contestation of the old value systems and outlook by the younger generation, in a more profound and apparently vehement manner, from the time of the students' Unrest or Revolt of the late 1960s and the early eighties. Although their revolt appeared in Europe and China at that time, it is by no means confined to those nations. Its echoes are resonating among the youth worldwide and are taking different forms in different countries depending on the socio-cultural situation of the nations concerned. Challenging the accepted values of the past and even those of the present, and opting for the assertion of one's right and freedom to work out together with ones contemporaries a new vision and plan of action have become the order of the day. Old value systems and codes of conduct reverentially held and enthusiastically nurtured were demystified, dethroned and unceremoniously dumped into the dustbins of history. May be some educational theories of European and Latin American authors like Ivan Illich and Pablo Freire have provoked the phenomenon of challenge and revolt; but today it has found philosophical expression in some of the theories of people like J. Derida and the school of post modernity. I would like to submit that all the three factors mentioned above have in their own way contributed to the present climate of looking to the future, and Religion of the Future is no exception.

2.2. *Impact on Organized Religions*

The three factors mentioned above are, to my mind, symptomatic of our times. As the phenomenon of globalization is bound to extend its tentacles and tighten its grip on nations and cultures, living encounter between other people and their religions is going to be a universal reality; plurality of religions and cultures will become the daily experience of people around the world either from the easily accessible television programmes or even to a much lesser extent from physical proximity. This impending and irreversible breach of the splendid isolation of religions and cultures, most of which developed in their

monolithic world without much contact with the world outside and its realities, is destined to effect a profound and far-reaching transformation in their self-understanding, understanding and appreciation of others and their mutual relationship. Similarly the spirit of contestation and unwillingness to take anything, however lofty and revered, for granted and a methodology of accepting anything and everything only after questioning with a set of fresh parameters may tend to upset the hitherto accepted range of beliefs and mutually exclusivist religious claims. An additional factor which we have to take into account in the present context is the deep awareness of people and nations about their self-identity and self-worth, and their strong unwillingness to sacrifice those on any altar of superiority or hegemonic considerations. All these are important factors that impact on the faith and practice of organized religions today and possibly tomorrow.

3. Tradition and Modernity

We may start with a word of caution regarding the use of these two terms for our purpose here. We are using the term modernity in contradistinction to tradition, and not in contrast to post-modernity. To put it differently, in our use of the term modernity we do not abide strictly by its technical meaning namely the duration or conceptual time and content frame of that particular period; instead we use it in a general and wider sense to include also the contemporary developments. In that sense, post modernity is also included within the purview of the word modernity. In the specific context of our discussion, tradition may be considered as the constant factor, though it will be interpreted and expressed in terms relevant to the changing times; where as modernity points to changing perceptions of new generations and the change both in ideas and expressions that take place in the evolving context of life and human experience.

Having said that, one must also note that tradition and modernity have always made significant contributions to the development and growth of religions throughout their history. Every important age had its contribution to the evolving conceptual framework of man and his perception, which gradually affected his way of life. Although the

core element of the content of the system of beliefs remains the same, the living expressions of that core take up new forms and innovative practices almost imperceptibly. That change may be experienced at a wider and deeper level only after quite sometime. However, that change can be termed a new way of being of the same core content of the faith community or religion. This kind of dynamic change and adaptation to a new and emerging perception of man about himself and the world around him is a necessary means for survival and growth of religions and cultures, and in fact, it has been taking place in all living religions down the centuries. Only those cultures and religions which were able to make such changes survived. It is also to be noted that religions are most vigilant not to take the risk of accepting and adopting whatever is on offer, but they judiciously pick and choose only those elements which can go along with their specific genius. In an age like ours when nations and cultures are increasingly interacting among themselves and in the process getting often more enlightened, they want to integrate modern creative insights and healthy practices and thus support and strengthen the life of individuals and communities, enabling them to face the challenges of the future with courage and confidence, and not to leave their followers out in the cold to succumb meekly to the forces of modernity.

Seen under this perspective one may say that tradition and modernity are the two important and essential poles within which change or evolution of religions and culture slowly but surely takes place, neither of which are eternally constant, although the latter is by nature often unpredictable and hence always has an element of surprise.

4. Religion of the Future

In the light of the above mentioned facts and circumstances it may not be altogether wrong to suggest that the future evolution of the religious phenomenon will be on the basis of encounter of living religions and the set of questions each religion poses to itself and to others on the basis of a self-confident and yet shared awareness of a certain inadequacy and incompleteness, and the consequent need of integrating elements from religions other than one's own. Although

that may be the direction followers of religions are inclined to take, one cannot set any time frame for such a process to culminate. As and when the urge becomes wide and deep enough it will create a momentum for suitable integration. This process may also give rise to, I submit, a sharper distinction between religiosity and spirituality. While one may still find religiosity thriving, one may also notice that the spirit of each religion is expressed in a much-refined manner and in more inclusive terms than at present[5]. It manifests, to some extent, the result of the slow and gradual process of some kind of self-purification on the one hand and a sort of symbiosis on the other taking place in the context of prayerful co-existence and living dialogue of religions.

It does not mean that we are in for and undifferentiated sort of religion everywhere. It means, however, that religious traditions will be more open to the ideas and concepts emanating from other living traditions of the world, and may even accept some religious perceptions and practices from other traditions, provided they will suit the spirit and genius of their religion. In that sense one may even think of

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5.   Currently there is a discussion taking place on the difference between religiosity and spirituality, terms used almost as synonyms till recently. The definitive differentiation between the two terms may need a lot more clarification. For our purposes religiosity may be described as the practice of traditions and rituals giving expression to and nurturing the inner spiritual core of a religion. Although religiosity presupposes spirituality in any given religious tradition, the emphasis and popularity accorded to some rituals and religious practices can also make them a routine so much so that the inner core is almost eclipsed and thus becomes hollow and meaningless. In such instances religiosity of a person or a group of persons need not necessarily enhance spirituality. Thus religiosity without spirituality is not impossible, and in fact such a phenomenon is not infrequently observed. On the other hand spirituality may be described as that intense life of the spirit in accordance with the inner core of any religious faith, which serves as the foundation of one's religious beliefs. Deepening and growth of that life and God-realization is also the goal of ones' religious belief and practice. Spirituality can and, in fact, it does often profoundly impact on a person's life and activities even without a flourish of external activities. Spirituality expresses itself in religiosity, but religiosity need not always be the expression of spirituality.

clarifying and deepening certain concepts of a given tradition with the help of related concepts in other traditions. In short, if the past emphasis was placed on sharp differentiation and unique identity, future may see greater emphasis given to elements and areas that unite religions. The tendency may be for greater tolerance and some degree of appreciation of others where differences exist. A relatively purer form of belief and practice can be expected in the future. Even if the borderlines of cultures may some what be blurred, it will not be the result of external forces; on the contrary it can only be the fruit of serious reflection and willing acceptance of those elements for their abiding value and usefulness for the vitality of the accepting traditions. The practical norms for such acceptance may also differ in more significant ways than in the past because of the attitudinal changes of future generations.

The basic reason for such indispensable changes in one of the most important dimensions of human life like religious beliefs can be found in the ever deepening understanding of human nature and its relation with humans living in various cultural zones. New insights gathered through in-depth studies of human nature at the level of empirical sciences open up a whole range of fresh understanding of the human person and his fundamental relationship to his geographical and cultural environment, the contours and parameters of development of his religious perception and the like, so much so that the study of religious belief and practice at a deeper level is today made possible. Moreover, if formerly religions and cultures developed by and large in splendid isolation and have peaked their insights and understanding in such insular context, today on the contrary, the horizon of man's life and conduct is as wide as the universe. His observations, studies of himself in relation to other humans and their cultures, hitherto inaccessible on a deeper level, necessarily demand a reassessment of his concepts related to himself, the world and the Ultimate. A sedimentation and articulation of this phenomenon may take time though it will crystallize in the form of new attitudes and practices in the process. As Radhakrishnan says, we cannot wipe our slates clean and then try to write something totally new; and this is so specially with regard to ancient cultures and civilizations. Since religion is an

integral, even fundamental dimension of culture, cultural mutations of a deeper level affect also areas of religious beliefs and practices. I am not suggesting that everyone makes their kind of integration of cultural and religious values. For the uninitiated this can also create considerable confusion. They may also feel the need and search for integration and may be looking for some lead. Here the scholars of the science of religion, theologians, religious leaders and those in authority have the role of articulating possible ways of integration. Such articulation will save the common man from the embarrassment of running from pillar to post and help him overcome the pulls and pressures of leading a life between the demands of tradition and the aspirations of modernity.

It is often noticed that no society or social grouping is willing to lose its perceived identity as cultural or religious units in the vast ocean of cultural and religious anonymity, unless it is absolutely necessary for its own survival. Probably the vastly enlarged European Union is an example: each member nation has deep awareness of itself and its cultural moorings, and so wants to be true to itself, even while it tries to be integrated as far as possible into a wider community of some kinship and solidarity. In other words the dynamics of modernity in a way helps to articulate more clearly one's essential identity while at the same time opening up the possibility of wider solidarity. Questions like this need further studies and research also in the fields of sociology of religions for further enlightenment and greater clarity.

5. Conclusion

I have been trying to look at some emerging trends in the contemporary society and figure out the possible ways they may affect the future of religion or even the religion of the future. In such an evolution, tradition will be the deep anchor on which religions can support themselves while modernity will be the ever-changing horizon with which religions will have to establish a constant process of dialogue in order to make themselves meaningful to their followers in their day to day life in relation to their fellow beings and to the Ultimate. A better understanding and deep appreciation among religions of the world is emerging as a distinct possibility although constrains on the way are not negligible on a subject like religion which evokes strong

emotions individually and collectively. A creatively faithful interpretation of tradition in relation to the modern understanding of the human and the Ultimate stands to gain much for the religion of the future. The refreshing breeze moving across the world seems to whisper gently: 'The bonds that unite us are stronger than the barriers that divide us'.

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New Religious Movements:
A Contemporary Kerala Scene

P. Radhika

Louis Dumont in an essay on Renunciation in Indian religions suggested that, 'the secret of Hinduism may be found in the dialogue between the renouncer and the man in the world. Much has been written about the salience of sanyasa or renunciation in Hindu culture. Hindu society is best known by renunciation, its celebrated cultural ideal. Although renunciation is undoubtedly a value orientation, which fascinates even the worldview of the worldly householder, it does not however bestow its distinctive character upon the every day life of the Hindus. An attempt is made here to analyse the role and influence of the Swamijis or Gurus who had renounced the worldly house holders life, but who had succeeded in guiding thousands of house holders lives, to become the leaders of the religious movements or founders of cult religion in modern Kerala society, i.e., an effort is made to understand Dumont's observation about the 'Dialogue' between Sanyasa and gṛhasta. Both these distinct entities had intertwined so much so that a demarcation line between the two has become a difficult task.

During the past one century Kerala has seen the emergence of new forms of religion that is different in its implications from its earlier ones. The rise of religious and spiritual movements is a complex phenomenon that involves many different facets of religious and cultural life. The religious horizons of Kerala society in the 2nd half of the 20th century is very much dominated by the dynamics of such religions which had chalked out a space of its own in the process of

Hindu community formation by opening up new vistas. The Mission/ Matha or the 'cult' religions of which Rama Krishna Mission is the first and most typical have been evolving in a new pattern and this study proposes to analyse, this phenomenon as an aspect of the new 'Hindutva'.

We have a contemporary stream of thought which advocates the revival of 'ancient Indian culture' the religious and moral values of Sanathana Dharma that peddles along with suitable cocktails of Democracy, Liberty and Nationalism. Even at the impressionistic level, this democracy is sufficiently abstract to be practically valueless. The Liberty is raised up into another world preferably disoriented from the free milieu of the social relations of any specific society. The proposed nationalism has to be analysed in all vigour properly distinguishing it from the Nationalism of the colonial period, wherein we understand that Nationalistic slogans in themselves need not have any progressive characters as they had in colonial India. Most of the writers of this trend consciously relate themselves to the 'Ancient Indian Culture' though the authorities they cite are from among the prophets of the 19th century Indian Renaissance. Religion thus constituted the centre or pivot around which culture and nationalism revolves.

That Religions are a major social force should now be recognized as an unquestionable fact because a) they are centres of motivation, authority and allegiance, b) obvious determinants in some degree of how people behave and act in situations of private and public choices and c) serve as mobilizing and organised centres of mass politics. In fact they become a social force converted into source and vehicles of direct political powers, a phenomenon that in recent times has become more pronounced and prevalent.

An Overview of Cult Religions

The term 'cult' is used to denote the religious groups of Satya Sai Baba, Chinmayananda and Matha Amruthananda Mayi instead of Math/Mission religions, as has been the practice. The emergence of new religious movements, which are often, designated as alternative religious traditions, Fringe, Religions, sects etc are a universal

phenomenon in the second half of the 20th century and in the Indian context it has got a long history. Though these three religions share many common elements with the Matha religions I would prefer to categorise them as 'cults' mainly because of the psychological emphasis that is visible in the emergence and maintenance of these religions. One can locate different levels or grades of psychological elements present in these religions, for instance the Chinmayananda cult shows lesser degree of psychological influence than the other two.

These cults are either centred around a single Ashram, a founder and his reputation or a part of a chain of monasteries with a more involved organisational framework. In either case the lead role and the source of charisma centre around 'Sanyasins' who attract a faithful band of devotees either from the locality or in certain cases from far-off places. Ideologically these have a mild contempt for traditional religion, generally no respect for entrenched tradition and treat temple religions as too mild or even hypocritical. There is some sectarian rivalry between- these 'Ashrams' or groups and some competition for lay support and a devotee base. These prestigious organisations even drew financial sustenance and devotees from abroad, which is usually a source of respectability in the areas where they are situated. The middle class is into this cult in a new way. It is less demanding in ritual terms and does not stand in the way of modern luxuries. By making renunciation a value built into every day life, it ensures an aloofness from both ritual and the attention of modern life. In fact the Guru and his followers often aspire to be a self-sufficient community in many cases.

At this point, I think we have to differentiate these cult religions from the new cults or new religious movements in the west, though they share many common features. In the west in most cases they are described as attacks against the existing system of beliefs and practices and the Orthodox Church is often criticised ideologically and institutionally. They are non-traditional and marginal and so they can easily appear to be a threatening force that lies beyond comprehension and control. In the Indian context these cult religions are not marginal and they apparently appear to be co-existing with

the major stream of 'Hindu Religion acting both in a complementary and contributory way. They drew their source of strength from Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas and go very well within the Hindu fold. These Gurus are accepted as avataras or representatives of God or as 'Gurus' themselves for there is adequate space for 'Avatars and Gurus' in the Hindu life world.

The word 'cult' commonly used to refer to many new religious group, is loaded with diverse meanings. The traditional meaning of cult (cultus in Latin) as a specific form of worship or ritual within a religious tradition is no longer in use. However the cults or new religious Movements at present represent diverse and complex organisations whose significance cannot be gauged without reference to the socio-cultural and religious situation of the 2nd half of the 20th century. As a result, their nature, characteristics, significance and implications cannot be summarised in, much less determined by, a single narrow definition. The understanding and evaluation of a phenomenon like this necessitates a probe into three major distinct (though some times related) definitions of a cult, which can be broadly classified as religious, psychological and sociological.

Religious Definitions

Cult is defined as a group, religious in nature, which surrounds a leader or a group of teachings, which either denies, misrepresents or adds to the main scriptures or conventional existing religions. They believe in ongoing revelations and stress experience rather than theological reasoning. These new cults fall under the broad definition of religion that has become standard in the academic study of religion. They promote classical religious theologies and use rituals that are similar to those of other religious traditions. The belief in some kind of transcendent reality, insistence that life has a spiritual or nonmaterial aspect, the conviction that is an after life and the practice of a spirituality that leads to transcendent goals are all religious in nature. One cannot understand the appealing qualities of these 'cults' or formulate a response to their presence unless one recognises their religious/spiritual endeavours. Two major factors: 1) They have an underlying philosophical and religious system that includes god-realisation as the individual's ultimate goal and 2) meditations and

yoga, recitation of prayers, Bhajans (in the name of cult religious founder/ gurus also included) to any Hindu/non -Hindu deities and respect and veneration to the long line of gurus as practises or modes of conveyance to achieve the goal represent their religious character. In the case of Matha Amruthananda Mayi young devotees are initiated into Brahmacharya by the 'Matha' in a very simple way and their celibacy and functions, as missionaries are justifiable on religious grounds.

Both these Sai Baba and Matha Cult share some common ideological and institutional elements. Sai cult became popular from the 60s and Matha a still more recent phenomenon. Both the Baba and Matha in several ways convey their divinity and a spiritual aura is maintained throughout their interaction with people. At a particular point in their lifetime they declare themselves as gods and their purpose of life is revealed to the public in several ways, which is taken over to a broader spectrum by their handful of devotees. The resistance from the people often strengthened their motives and very quickly they became the shining stars in the spiritual world of the Keralites.

Baba in Puttapparthi runs an international organisation with its 'Samities' in every corner of this land. The main functions of these local samities, which had its headquarters at the district levels is to conduct Bhajans once a week, 'occasional satsangam, Narayana seva and to celebrate all the Hindu/non-Hindu religious auspicious days/ festivals and the Birthday of the founder. Matha has established 'Maths' in different parts of the country at local, national and international levels and the function is the same as the samities. The appeal to promote a religion with aspects of all important world religions in order to show unity of God and the meaninglessness of religions is a significant feature of the Baba cult. Though one cannot deny the fact that Baba's basic teachings are based on Hindu scriptures. The images in the emblem which Baba uses represent symbols of many religions and it is described as "Sarvamathamudra" which becomes altogether the propaganda for a new religion. The main attracting/ miraculous aspect of Matha cult can be associated with the Bhava-dharsanan of 'Amma' in Krishnabhava and Devi Bhava, i.e., the Matha will appear before the devotees on particular days in the Krishna

Bhava and on Fridays in Devi bhava clad in the dress and jewels of Devi as it is portrayed in a photograph or calendar. The visualising effect of this dharshan mesmerises the devotees along with the miracles that happen in each and every dharshana which are of course experienced by the devotees. Matha receives all the devotees present at this darshanam and the Godliness is revealed through the devotee's experiences.

The institutional functions of Mathas and Samities include the publication of Books and journals, which celebrates the Avathar of these gurus. Life history, miracles shown by them and the personal experience of the devotees, enrich the books published by the respective trusts along with the teachings of Matha, Baba, and other religious texts of the former gurus. Sanathana Saradhy (the traditional carrier) journal of the Sai Samithi and Mathru Vani (words of Amma) of the Matha Maths include 1) the messages of the gurus to the grahastha devotees, the programmes of the gurus in the national and international level (the popularity is emphasised), 2) the works done by different agencies in different parts of the country / world (a systematic evaluation of the previous activities were undertaken) which include religious and non religious activities of these groups and 3) the major portion of the magazines is left out for redefining, interpreting the Hindu scriptures and ancient Texts (proclaiming the dharma of these groups in the contemporary religious cultural scene of the country). The religious and spiritual ideology can be located in all the functions of these missions in the contemporary society.

Psychological

This is mainly focused on the way these cults get new recruits and maintain their members and how they affect those who join them. Two distinct and opposed ideas of what a cult is, have emerged in psychological literature. The first is that cults are dangerous institutions that cause severe mental and emotional harms to those who commit themselves to their creeds and life styles. A cult is considered to be a pseudo- religious group headed by a powerful leader who dominates the lives of his/her followers and offers them false solutions to all their problems. The 2nd evaluates these cults to be helpful organizations that provide an alternative therapy to many young adults as they are

faced with making momentous decisions at important junctures in their lives. Cult membership it is claimed has led many people to give up their addiction to drugs and alcohol and to introduce in them a measure of intellectual security, emotional stability and organized behavioral patterns that contrast sharply with their previously confused and chaotic existence. These psychological definitions are more concerned with individual psychology and they tend to neglect the social aspects and spiritual dimensions of the persons involved, but they are relevant as their main thrust is to relate individual involvement in intense religious groups to specific forms of human psycho-pathology.

One of the most frequently asked questions about the 'cults' is what kind of person is attracted to their ideals, beliefs and practices. Is there a cult personality? Does the decision to become a member constitute a free choice? Is he/she in such a psychological condition that he/she can't make an autonomous decision? Are there outside pressures? Do these groups attract the weak and vulnerable who are unable to cope with the problems of life? Does entrance into these groups give them a special status/a new identity in the society? These are the sets of questions, which crop up when an attempt is made to analyze these religious phenomena?

Reactions to these cults vary enormously. Many seem to ignore their presence and their knowledge about them might be limited to what they read in the occasional magazine, article, newspaper reports and advertisements and from contacts with the devotees who represent themselves as eye witness to the miraculous experiences. Those who are inquisitive enough pursue the contacts and finally reach up in the Ashram premises. Some attack these miracles as magic or hypnotic effects and personally explore their cause - attaching themselves as devotees. In the 80s and 90s the turnover rate is rather very high compared to the 60s and 70s and it gathered momentum from all the communities and classes.

One of the common theories of cult formation is that members of these groups are individuals who seek satisfaction and happiness for their various needs. "Uncertain of the future, with career and life goals neither clearly seen nor firmly established, cults provided a

packaged personality and the illusion of security in comfortable orderly structures and safe non-threatening, noncompetitive, predictable, repeated routine acceptance, approval and affection from self assured, enthusiastic persuasive new friends with answers and commitment seem to fill the void and give life new meaning. Alienation is another typical psychological problem and this is useful particularly when family problems are examined. In the modern society family crisis is more serious and rampant, the social norms either create or aggravate the problems. Unemployment, rising divorce rates, uncertainty of the future, cut throat competition in the educational and professional fields etc. create a particular situation where family relations are less significant. Interest in religious and philosophical matters also results in the search for new gurus who can quench their thirst for spiritual knowledge. Another major issue is concerned with contemporary identity crisis where the individual is in search of an identity to suit the social needs. Membership into these cult religions gives a new identity to the devotee, as they are suddenly elevated into a new status quo especially in the case of Sai cult where the majority of the devotees belong to upper middle class or higher class.

Sociological

Cults are composed of converts from different traditional backgrounds who gather around a charismatic leader. Because of the ambiguous and derogatory meaning that the word 'cult' connotes attempts have been made to find out a better phrase to designate those religious phenomenon popularly known as 'cults'. The resurgence of religious forces and the advent of religious movements in the last four decades have revitalized the study of religion in social sciences. They look upon those religious groups as social movements affecting not just individuals but society as a whole. They examine the way diverse religious institutions and organizations are formed and maintained the internal dynamics that make them viable social entities, their economic, social and political structures, the types of leadership that provides decisive legitimisation for the movements, beliefs and practices and the levels and types of commitment demanded of their devotees.

In the Kerala context, the sudden emergence of these religious cults requires an explanation. Probably the most common interpretation of cult formation is being the functional one. Let us start with that.

a) *Explanatory Function*

Religious revivals are said to emerge to satisfy practical human needs that are not being met to help people cope with new problems and social conditions that cannot be addressed in other ways. Religion is said to offer explanations, interpretations and rationalisations of the many facets of human existence. It satisfies the cognitive and intellectual needs by providing sure and definite answers. Inexplicable problems, which cannot be resolved by any other means, are unravelled by religious sources of knowledge and arguments.

b) *Emotional function*

Religion gives the individual an identity, security and courage. It reduces, relives anxiety, fear, tension and stress. It helps the individual to cope with life and face human dilemmas with comfort and confidence and contributes to emotional integration both at an individual and social level. In a context where the diffusion of personal identity has left many people lost, confused and afraid, the emergence of these forms of religions are imminent.

c) *Social function*

Religious beliefs and practices are instrumental in maintaining social solidarity and religion is a force of integration. In a society where traditional values of caste and social inequality as the basis of community which was solely determined by birth are challenged by the working of different agents of modernization, the social function of religion becomes all the more valid. Hinduism was a graded set of religions that was practiced but never preached in that, there was no community that these practices bound together nor any self-conscious identity that they supported. Far from it, these could be described only from outside or in retrospect and their ironic function in traditional agrarian societies were more the explanations of the existence of differences and divisions rather than legitimised social bonds and linkages. Contrary to the Christian image of religion that demanded faith from choice by individuals in a certain goal Hinduism obliged

unconscious or unwilling conformity of inactive bodies to codes that ordered their activities, their mutual distance and relations remains a strange aspect. These codes would have found faith irrelevant and Gods even superfluous. Religious or philosophical doctrines that evolved in traditional ancient India had little to do with these social practices as they were often produced within the social groups whose life world was built on the negation of the dominant groups. When religious revivalism is strengthened with these religious movements these aspects of Hinduism are to be taken into consideration.

d) Validating functions

Closely allied with the social one is that of validating cultural values. Religious beliefs and practices support at times, with moral and spiritual sanctions, the basic institutions, values and aspirations of a society. It inculcates social and ethical norms, justifies, enforces and implements a people's ideological assumptions and ways of life, is well apparent with the current social situation that exists in Kerala and for that matter in the Indian sub continent. Contemporary accounts of Hindu revivalism detect its roots in certain developments in Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab and elsewhere in the last quarter of the 19th century, when Hindu movements of reforms and revival made their first appearance. But power as an important aspect in the external order of Hindu society that is the arena of Indian politics remained outside the formally adopted programs of the 3 movements (Bhrama Samaj, Arya Samaj and Vivekanada's works) although it absorbed the public life of many of its prominent members. A Hindu Political party was established in 1915 and the subsequent growth of its culture constituted the ideology of Hindutva that is being a Hindu. Sarvarkar's explanation of Hinduism and the usage of terminology as to "we Hindus" excluded the spiritually alienated others and thus 'Hindus' were revealed about their pre-eminence as the first citizens of the land by virtue of their cultural identity. From Dayanada Swaraswathi to Golvaker there is a clean shift from critical importance of the canon to culture, or to be more precise National Culture. In this Pan-Indian context, the emergence, organizational functions and maintenance of these religious cults become more relevant.

Religion enters into a new realm with the emergence of cult religions. Most of these groups accept a coned down version of vedantha that is mixed with a puritan ethic. The medium is religious and the terms articulation is social and it creates the space for the religious practice of a social group to evolve. Secondly social service and performance of tradition are part of the program of most of these religions and the reform of the community reinforces its identity.

The next significant aspect, which contributes in making religion a social force, can be located in the religious discourses. It appears in different names. Geetha, Jnana yanjha, Mahabhagavatha Sapthaha, Naradha Bhakthi Suthra, and interestingly enough many new rituals are added to each of these events. Temples, public halls, temporary sheds in public places and in certain cases individual households act as venue of such discourses. The grahasta devotees are always keen to give 'bhiksha' to their Gurus and his brhamachari disciples and to conduct religious discourses. Thus the possibility to identify the space for religions and no religious activities become a difficult task as there is a shift from temple to household for such activities. Apart from the prominent gurus, many grahastas like pandit Gopalan Nair, Visravanath Raman Namboodiripad, Ottur Unni Namboodiripad etc. are famous in these fields and their work is remarkably free from communalism and formal religion.

These discourses are often organized by the Chinmaya mission Amruthananda Mayi math of sai Samthi. A critical study of the crowd or audiences attending the discourses of Chinmayananda clarifies the following aspects. In the district headquarters the number of audience varied from 500-600 to 1000-1500 in the interior regions the number is slightly less. The nature of the crowd also considerably varied from doctors, engineers, merchants, private and government officers on the one end, the middle class on the other. There was definitely no space for agricultural or industrial labourers. Secondly their responses to a higher degree were determined by the values of the classes to which they belonged. The fluency and articulating capacity of Chinmayanada in English language the humour, the anecdotes of his experiences in USA, Europe and other foreign countries that he narrates along with Geeta slokas, precisely to add spices to his discourses attracted the attention of the audience. These were

discussed thoroughly when they dispersed after the show. The Geeta and the religious message of the discourse never seemed to have reached the hearts of the masses.

However the picture of the 90s is different. Amruthanda Mayi visits to district head quarters to establish a new matha and the number of people attended the function was somewhere between 2000-5000. The whole town was blocked by these devotees and the normal life of the people was affected. Interestingly enough almost all the Hindu houses around the region wholeheartedly agreed to accommodate 50 to 60 members of the group and they felt proud of their position as 'hosts'. The nature of the crowd was such that it included people from all sections of society. The labourers and the lower community who were left out in the previous decade are very much active in the present audience. The Sathya Sai Cult, which was primarily known as the religion of the rich society, attracted followers from the lower stratum in this period. Now we come to the responses, it sees like this. To quote, 'Hindu philosophy, dharma and vedanthic principles were explained and interpreted very simply and it is simply grand to be there in the audience'. The newly created religiosity of the people is vividly portrayed in the responses.

In the history of religion in India much importance is given to the sacred space like temple, thirthas, rivers, mountains etc. and each Hindu household possesses a sacred space of its own, however small it may be. Recently due to the development of the cult religions a major shift is visible in the nature of these sacred places (puja rooms). The central space occupied by Aryan/ Dravidian Gods and Goddesses in the individual as well as public religious spaces (Bhajana Mandapams) are pushed to the background and Bhaba (Bhagavan) and Matha (Amma) occupies the prime position. Padapooja the traditional ritual is also revived and the padha of Baba and Amma are worshiped along with other deities Shiva, Vishnu, Ayyappa etc. One important aspect of this is that the portraits of the cult founders are placed in all the rooms of the houses and the distinction between religious and nonreligious becomes difficult spatially.

These cult religions are organised in a disciplined manner as big institutions just as multinational ones, which controlled. Properties in

the form of educational institutions, super speciality hospitals and in the case of Sai Baba a University in Bangalore. Along with religious functions, many other social welfare activities are undertaken which in effect had increased their social impact and the religious norms are preserved even in these extra activities. The symbols and signs of the religions are significant as the value-loaded meanings are embedded in it. They are consciously/unconsciously caught by the people and it had gone to such an extent that the Hindu parents are eager to send their children to the educational institutions under the control of these religions rather than sending them to Christian convents. The children at least will be familiar with Indian culture is the attitude entertained.

The organisational structure of this group often functions like a community. They have succeeded so far in maintaining the secular nature though the religion-based political parties have absorbed 'these cults' and its world as a whole as their working field. These institutions organised their finances mainly from foreign countries and the devotees include both foreign and natives of all classes and in the case of Kerala of all castes. At the moment as one enters into these religions, the regional, national, caste/community distinctions cease to exist and in the monasteries there is no difference between foreign and native sanyasis. They all share the same amenities and it had been described in the literary works published by the institutions. But the presence of the foreigners in the organisation had a psychological effect on the natives especially of the particular regions where the ashrama functions. The name of the ashrama is globalised through the magazines published which contain the day-to-day events of the main ashrama, the functions and ceremonies attended by the Guru and his disciples in different parts both national and international and news about local grass root level bodies functioning in the respective areas. To add to the publicity of the leaders of the organisations, a programme of the future international tour also is given. A feeling of Kinship exists among the members of these groups and when they meet in private or public spaces they greet each other with 'Sai Ram' 'Om Namasivaya', 'Hari Ohm' etc. instead of Hello. The identity of the member is asserted by these symbolic gestures and the community relation of the monastery is extended to the grahastas when the guru prescribes duties for the grahastha devotees, which is different from that of the sanyasis. This new community cuts across the boundaries

of the other community divisions, caste as well as regions and its horizons are expanding. The search for new identities in the modern age finds a meaning in this context and within this cult religion new identities are made real. The relation between Hindu and caste identity is a case in question and so far caste identity has been conflict and dependent on religion. These cults provided a religious identity, which can be equated with Hindu identity where caste is meaningless and the religion less ritualistic.

The case of Matha stands aloof in the history of religions in India as she is a 'woman' and she hails from a lower community (Deevara community). The whole community got a divine charge and the myth of Satyavathi, the mother of Vedavyasa is taken afresh to explain the greatness of Amma. The sacredness of the region Vallikavu also is problematised and several stories to that effect are circulated. The cult of Mother Goddess helps the Amma cult to flourish in many ways and she really became the mother of the entire humanity. Love is the mechanism through which she operates and the emotional strength of mother's love is immense in the present society. It is this psychological factor, which has to be emphasised in analysing these cult groups.

In India, each sanyasin or monastic complex has a vaguely defined territory and clientele. But these religions use the language of a separate religion and the founder sanyasin being God or Avathar, (Chinmayananda is an exception) his gospels and the organisations complete the basic symbols. The expansion of these religions finds its limits in lay/grahastha relation with the sanyasin and in the possibility offered by other religious and charismatic figures. How far conscious communalism and these and these cults converge or diverge is not clear at this stage as communalism is treating very uneven territory here. Their efforts are least helped by the fact that even in mythology there has not been a common centre to link the Avathars, Sanyasins or Temples.

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Shifting Paradigms in Education - Some Critical Issues

Thomas Abraham

Paradigm is the way we see the world, the way we perceive social phenomena. Our interpretation of the social phenomena will be on the basis of our paradigms. Our attitudes and actions will be based on these perceptions and interpretations. That means, it is important for us to become aware of the paradigms we uphold. Daniel Goleman, the author of Emotional Intelligence, says that a paradigm is like a map. The map of a territory is not the territory. If the map is wrong, i.e., if the labelling is wrong, however hard we try, we will not reach the goal. We will be lost.

We seldom question the accuracy of our mental maps. We are usually even unaware that we have them. We simply assume that the way we see things is the way they really are, or the way they should be. Let us take an example from the development sector. One dominant paradigm in development, even today, is that poverty is a result of misfortune. This paradigm or mental map creates the perception that the unfortunate (less fortunate) brethren deserve to be pitied (attitude) and to be helped (action). At the same time there are other perceptions or alternate paradigms which see poverty as "broken relationships" or exploitation. These alternate paradigms naturally create different attitudes and different styles and strategies of intervention.

Now let us look at the educational sector. In ancient India the paradigm was *sa vidya ya vimukthaye*. That which liberates is education. This was basically a spiritual vision. Education was a spiritual quest and the liberation envisaged was liberation from the mundane. The story of Athreyan which we see in one of the Upanishads is a

fine example of this. Athreyan joined a gurukula in order to learn medical science or *vaidyasastra*. For several months this *shishya* helped the ashram in the daily chores such as bringing firewood, drawing water, taking care of cows etc. The guru never spoke a word of vaidyasastra. Reluctantly and fearfully the boy went to his Guru and asked, "Guruji, when are you going to begin vaidyasastra?" The Guru pondered for a moment and replied: "Dear Son, there is no point in starting vaidyasastra unless and until you are thorough with your "dharmasastra".

From this incident we can understand how far we have strayed from our cultural moorings and priorities. Values such as truth and non-violence, love and tolerance have no place in the syllabus today. Children imbibe these values incidentally, and by co-curricular means.

The expression "paradigm shift" was coined by Thomas Kuhn. It means break with traditions, with old ways of thinking, old perceptions. Today paradigms have shifted, or are shifting, in all walks of life - in academic field, in management, interpersonal relations, science, personal development etc.

In the field of education the dominant paradigm today is the Intelligence Quotient paradigm or IQ paradigm. This is historically a product of the industrial revolution. When people started moving away from agriculture, they started cracking their brains to increase productivity. Simultaneously the shifting of residence from rural settings to urban settings also started. Large families ceased to be the norm. Joint families ceased to be viable. In nuclear families children tended to be more task-oriented and less relationship oriented in their personal growth process. Consequently the children's IQ began to rise. When computer science developed children got access to computer games. These games replaced foot ball and other physical games which were relationship-oriented too. Puzzles, objective type questions in exams, quiz - all these placed emphasis on the use of brains for acquisition of knowledge in a reductionist style. Education tended to become less and less holistic. Competition replaced co-operation and conviviality. We bade farewell to the values of the shanthi mantra which prayed "om sahana vavathu.... om sahaveeryam karavavathu", a prayer for the grace to live together and to learn together. Traditionally our learning concept was related to four sources of enlightenment - the teacher,

the self, the peers and time*, Now all these have lost their place of importance. The internet is progressively replacing the teacher as a source of information, the peers are rivals and self is perceived more as competitor in the information market. The ancient wisdom said that "the rest will be learned in course of time", but we have no time to wait.

The modern English medium schools are often criticized as academic broiler farms. Children are insulated in all possible ways. Because of the heavy workload the play-time at home is reduced. Because the students travel by school bus or car, the peer interaction time is significantly reduced. In the classroom the emphasis is on information-transmittance. The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was introduced as an educational reform to facilitate a paradigm shift from the teacher-centred, task-oriented style to the child-centred activity-based style of learning. But in Kerala, unfortunately DPEP was criticized as a clever move to subject the lower class (economically weaker students who attend government schools and aided private schools) to a less efficient method of teaching. This criticism indicates the IQ paradigm with which the elite sections of society have become addicted.

When we look at various social phenomena we see reflections and concomitants of the IQ paradigm almost in all walks of life. Let us take the domain of skill development. Dale Carnegie's landmark book "How to win friends and influence people" is symptomatic of a society that seeks skills and techniques at the cost of genuineness. It tends to praise 'craftiness' and promote utilitarianism in relationships. What I *have* is seen as more important then what I *am*.

In management sector, this trend is inflected where productivity is over-emphasized. A manager is one who gets *things* done. His task-orientation is often out of balance with relationship-orientation which cares for *people* as much as for *things* and tasks and profit. Here labour and management never merge. The management wants labour to produce, while the labourers want the management to manage

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* Acharyat padamdatte,
   Padam shishya swamedhaya,
   Padam saha brahmacharibhya
   Padam kalakramenacha.

because otherwise they will not have the employment. Naturally the management works through a hierarchy of positions and responsibilities. Fixed job skills are considered desirable and necessary in this paradigm, because it leads to specialization and to increased productivity. But this productivity is at the cost of man becoming a machine.

The critical word in the paradigms which we are examining is "efficiency". The IQ-based class room interaction is considered smart and efficient. Stephen Covey ("Seven Habits of Highly Effective People") calls efficiency a 'methods' word, meaning that it is only a method. What are methods for if they do not produce results? Effectiveness, on the other hand is a 'results' word. What we need is effectiveness which is efficiency plus. Some people can climb the ladder of success efficiently, but if the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall, they will not be effective. The skill of climbing has to be used in conjunction with a lot of awareness - why am I climbing, where am I climbing to, with whom am I climbing, am I comfortable with climbing, if not why not, etc. This awareness acts as a moderation and effectiveness is the result.

For many executives, says Covey, the dominant metaphor of life is the clock. We value the clock for its efficiency. Clock is dispassionate and impartial, time is time. Timelines are timelines. Clock is an aid to efficiency. Stephen Covey asserts that the symbol of effectiveness is the compass, not clock. Compass (like the Mariner's compass) symbolizes sense of direction, purpose in life, vision, perspective and balance.

The shift from efficiency to effectiveness is what we want in the educational system. The IQ conscious system of education is today rapidly bidding farewell to the teaching of basic sciences and the so-called conventional subjects. From biology to bio-technology is a shift from pure science to applied science. From mathematics to computer, and from commerce to management are also shifts to what are today known as applicational sciences.

When we move from a clock paradigm to a compass paradigm we do some adjustments. One result of this adjustment is that people become important for us. Another result is that what we achieve becomes sustainable. "Knowing that people and relationships are more important than schedules and things, we can subordinate a schedule without feeling guilty because we super ordinate the conscience, the

commitment to a large vision and set of values. We subordinate the clock approach of efficiency to the compass approach of effectiveness". Covey when using the compass, we subordinate our schedules to people and principles.

What we need in the educational system is the subordination of IQ to EQ, emotional quotient or emotional intelligence. Similar shifts and subordinations are required on several fronts. As mentioned above we have a tendency to glorify skills and techniques. These need to be subordinated to personal orientation and personal development in its larger sense. When this subordination takes place we would become more authentic and genuine. The new shift which the world of business and administration needs to have is from management to leadership. While a manager gets things done by hook or by crook, a leader inspires. The world needs more inspiring people than mere managers. Already in some computer firms they have started using this nomenclature. "Team leader", "project leader" etc. are coming into vogue. In fact the division into management and labour is seen today as inconvenient and less productive than seeing all workers as part of a team. The only difference is that each individual in the team has different specific roles and responsibilities. This shift is from reductionism to holism, from task-orientation to people-orientation. This has also implications for the usual administrative hierarchies. When team replaces management, hierarchy gives place to net-working. There are no ups and downs in net-working. Wages are replaced by new mixtures and options, incentives and ownership.

An important conceptual and applicational shift which is reluctantly being accepted in the educational sector is the role of the teacher. Athreyan's Guru was not a teacher. He was a facilitator of human development. The education we want is one which will facilitate human development rather than personal advancement which aims at more skills, "better" jobs, and higher salary. Facilitation leads to empowerment whereas "teaching" at higher levels leads to disempowerment. Facilitation needs skills based on humanistic psychology, and elements of andragogy rather than pedagogy.

"Where is the wisdom we have lost in our pursuit of knowledge?" asked T.S. Eliot in one of his poems. Education has three levels, it is said, They are information, formation and transformation. Information refers to the cognitive level, formation refers to the competency (skill) level, whereas transformation refers to change which is the essence

of learning process. We cannot have transformation without information and formation. But it is a pity if we are not able to see beyond the package of skills and techniques and campus recruitments which are based on these.

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Jeevadhara National Seminar
on Critical Issues in Socio-Religious Research

FINAL STATEMENT

We the participants in the national seminar organized by the Jeevadhara Centre for Socio - Religious Research, June 4 and 5, 2004 studied the critical issues involved in socio-religious research. We feel that the Jeevadhara Centre has a crucial ongoing role to play in this field. As Dr. Cyriac Thomas, the Vice-Chancellor stated in his inaugural address, following the example set by Blessed Chavara the fathers in charge of the Centre have to promote this creative relation between sociology and religion in collaboration with the different departments of the University. The fundamental question is why religions that are expected to provide solutions to riddles of life and the meaning of all things that surround human life do not lead to a united perspective but rather to interreligious conflicts. The answer is that though religions may deal with God, the Ultimate Reality, they are about humans and essentially a human phenomenon. They have a substantial relation to historical, philosophical, political and social dimensions. So though religions have much in common in their search for the ultimate concern of life, there are also substantial differences in articulating its meaning in the concrete dimensions of life experience.

Though God is the one ultimate and infinite reality, religions actually started from the human effort to transcend the threat of non-existence present in everyday life and reach immortality relying on the intervention of the world beyond. This experience of a hidden force in life and hope of a help from beyond led to the perception of an ultimate meaning which was negatively perceived as emptiness denying the ultimacy of the phenomenal world, or positively as a projection of the dimensions of experience such as being, truth and

consciousness, which did not imply by themselves any limitation. Besides there was also a diversity of the human problems that called for a solution from the side of religion, namely the problem of change and multiplicity that surrounded humans, or the presence of evil in the world created and maintained by a good and all powerful God, and the meaning of suffering experienced by innocent beings. So some looked to a supreme Being, while others looked to God as a benevolent monarch who entered into a covenant or treaty with humans, and yet others look on God as the source of origin and authenticity.

But the serious problem for religions today is their politicization. Originally politics meant public service and indicated the effort to organize social life of humans to secure the perfect happiness and hence fundamentally religious, and religion itself was a communitarian celebration. But unfortunately politics got abused by selfish leaders who under the pretext of common good tried to use the public to advance their selfish interests, and religion itself disappeared from public life and became a private search for individual salvation. Today politics in religion has a bad name in the consciousness of the general public. We often meet with in the public arena, criminals who done the garb of religiosity, to hoodwink the public. A serious task of socio religious research is to expose the root of the false images the public has about politics and religion and restore their right understanding.

Another area of religions concern in sociology is the interaction between tradition and modernity. For us Indians modernity looks like an attack from the West on our ageold tradition, while for people in the West the wealth of world tradition has to serve human progress. The scientific certainty has been recently shattered and has been replaced by the uncertainty of post-modernity. Since the traditional religions are today coming out of their splendid isolation and as every culture had its own protective religion, some have started thinking about a world religion taking the positive points of all religions to support an emerging world culture. But one cannot ignore the threat posed by the presentday globalization to traditional values. On the other hand, as Dr. Radhakrishnan said one cannot wipe the slate clean and write anew. All modern developments mark a certain rediscovery of the past. Hence it is the task of the sociologist to see the birth of world soul to inspire and animate the ever-changing new situation.

Here perhaps the crucial question is how we can make the critical social understanding of religion to reach the people at large, so that society itself is transformed by our new socio-religious understanding. Perhaps a start has to be made with those who have already passed through traditional system and actually feel the inadequacy of its value system in dealing with the actual world. Our education is stocked with information; what we need are strategies to translate that information into tools of transformation. Today one of the shifts in educational emphasis is from I.Q. to E.Q. Emphasis has moved from science and mathematics to computer science and communication, a shift from pure knowledge to applied knowledge, from merely having a lot of knowledge to being a new person, from energy to synergy, from hierarchy to network, and from management to leadership, from efficiency to effectiveness, invoking the value system and the goals. There is a paradigm shift from study to learning. Every individual has a potential for growth. The task of education is providing the right environment. One has to pass beyond experiential learning to transformative knowledge, through the personalizing and localizing of strategies. As Paul Frere stated for social transformation issues have to be localized.

Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861-1907)

Patrick D'Souza

Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861-1907) was described by Rabindranath Tagore as a "Roman Catholic Ascetic, yet a Vedantin, spirited, peerless, self-reliant, learned and uncommonly influential". Born a Brahmin he typified the new Bengali middle class, educated, upper caste and Hindu. Yet his conversion to Roman Catholicism and his revolutionary ideas for explaining Christian doctrine with an Indian idiom, marked him out as exceptional.

He was an ardent nationalist who died while on arrest by the British for sedition in 1907.

Christian and Hindu, holy man and savant, prophet and revolutionary, Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, was a paradoxical figure who played a key role in the struggle for independence along with Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh and others. His fiery convictions and passionate rhetoric won for him many admirers and also those who branded him a dangerous revolutionary in the eyes of the British colonial establishment.

Vande Saccidananda, which is sung so much in the Hindi speaking Church today, is his poem to the Triune God.

He is in many ways the forgotten colossus of India's search for nationhood and modernity. He is arguably the greatest convert to Catholicism in modern times.

Knowledge of this convert will help the Church when so much is written adversely about conversion and converts.

His courageous effort to use Vedanta to understand Christian theology elicits admiration even today. He desired to have a religious

congregation of Indian inspiration. Other similar efforts show his visionary quality. The well-known Shanti Niketan was his idea, which Rabindranath Tagore nurtured effectively.

The amount that he has written on theological and national questions is impressive, as also the number of journals he started.

It is befitting that the Centenary of his death be celebrated in 2007. Should it be meant only for the Catholic Church? Should it be for the entire country?

It is a significant event that deserves to be celebrated not simply for historical reasons, but also as an event that bears much significance for the contemporary Church, and even our nation.

It would be good to involve, if possible, Calcutta, Yadavpur and Shanti Niketan Universities in such a commemoration. Professor Julius Lipner (who has written an excellent biography on Brahmabandhab, Delhi, Oxford University Press), and Fr. Gispert Sauch (who has gathered the writings of Brahmabandhab) should be involved.

We can reasonably hope that some theses on various aspects of his life and teaching will be studied in our doctoral theological institutions.

Already two books can be suggested as a preparation: *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay,* by Julius Lipner (Oxford University Press) and *Building Christianity on Indian Foundations* by Timothy Tennent (ISPCK, Delhi).

There will be a preliminary meeting on November 25 and 26, to plan the Centenary celebration in October 2007.

Bishop of Varanasi
Bishop's House
Varanasi

Book Reviews

P.T. Mathew, *WE DARE THE WATERS,* Chennai: Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras, 2001, pp.iv, 205, Rs.225.

The book is a sociological case study of the religious life both manifest and latent of Mukkuva Catholic community of Vizhinjam. The author says that he spent nine months living in the community, interviewing individuals and observing the life of the people at close quarters. The first chapter is prefaced with a brief survey of the past studies concerning the Kerala Fishermen. While describing one or another aspect of their life, they have not depicted the inner world and thought pattern of these people, because they have not paid enough attention to the religious factor. The book tries to enter the religious belief system of the fisher people, and methodologically to avoid "to superimpose an alien conceptual frame of religion on to a *primitive* and *backward* people". The Mukkuvas of Vizhinjam, who are culturally more or less identical with the Hindu Arayas and the Muslim Marakars, embraced Catholicism at the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century not for any external compulsion but to get out of their low social status. The study bases itself on the sociological definition of religion as consisting of beliefs, rites and organization, at the same time as linking religious phenomena with other social facts and admitting also a non-empirical, transcendental dimension as central to it.

The second chapter deals with the emergence of Catholic Mukkuva community, especially of Vizhinjam. While the Paravars of the Pearl fishery coast on the south-east coast of India were forced to become Catholics to get the protection of the Portuguese against the Arabs, the Mukkuvars embraced Christianity voluntarily in order to get out of the lowest segment of society outside the caste system. The

Paravas were systematically instructed in the new faith by the missionaries; the Mukkuvas embraced only the externals retaining the traditional fisher people's religious culture. The Portuguese visitors of the time, who witness to the fervent faith of the Paravas, state that the Mukkuva Christians living on the coast between Kollam and Cape Comerin were on the whole poorly instructed in the faith and hard to deal with. Since each of their community was controlled by a few *kudumbakar* or major families they did not feel comfortable with ecclesiastical authority and structures. According to the author even today the Mukkuva community of Vizhinjam is not very different. The third chapter explains in detail the Mukkuva cosmology and chapter four shows that fishing was the centre of their ritual world. Constantly faced with the dangers of the sea for them *kadalamma,* lady ocean, was a jealous woman who did not like the presence of women on the sea shore or in the boat, whose moods had to be constantly watched, and dangers warded by the help of protective deities. Becoming Catholics they only replaced the Hindu protective deities of Kali and Murugan with the militant saints brought by the Portuguese like St.Michael, and St.James of Compostello who according to legend vanquished the armies of the Moors in the 10th century. They have free recourse to sorcerers both Hindu and Catholic, though they know it is wrong. The whole mindset is defensive against impending dangers. Even praying for the departed with a series of Masses offered for them is principally to avoid their returning as demons to haunt the living.

The author calls this area of religion not sacred as distinct from the profane but "Divine". Chapter five is a description of the dimensions of the conception of the divine like the cult of the *Cinthara Mata* Our Lady of the Sea, protrectress of those who go out fishing into the sea, along with the worship of other Hindu godesses and Christian warrior saints, and the coexistence of Christian and Indic elements. Chapter six explains the social organization of the Mukkuva community with the committee of the heads of the major families at the top exerting a strict control on every detail of the life of the community, the confraternities and lay associations in the middle with its well defined field of apostolate and the ordinary people at the bottom. Recently

the parish priest has gained a dominant role in the community. The implications of the latent religion including a certain Christian Tantrism is explored in chapter seven. Chapter eight presents the author's conclusions. The main point is that the religion of such marginal groups which do not find mention in the main line religious history deserves to be explored. Regarding the Mukkuvas the Iberian Catholicism brought by the Portuguese and the Indian heritage of the fisherfolk never got really synthesized; they were in constant encounter and dialogue during the past three centuries. If at all anything "the Mukkuva Catholicism at the latent level shows how a marginal group finds itself at home with disparate elements of apparently incongruous religious traditions." At the latent level people are *real subjects* of their religiosity. Their existence on the margins of society and the risk ridden occupation impel the community to evolve a *theology of combat*.

But the preceding descriptions show the people too preoccupied with their day to day problems and immediate goals to have any time left to think about the ultimate meaning of life and to have a holistic view of the divine. One is so conscious of the jealousy of the gods about human success that even after a successful catch fishers have to act out a mock quarrel among themselves with a generous use of abusive language in order to fool the deities! Even the ten day feast of the Cinthara Matha is more a matter of sound and fury to get a respite from constant boredom than the expression of deep devotion and of love and fellowship felt towards other human beings. Perhaps the militant Catholicism brought by the Portuguese did not impress people as a religion of love. But the detailed study of the latent religiosity is a very necessary and helpful tool to examine critically the religiosity lived and practieed by people today.

John Chathanatt S. J., *GANDHI AND GUTIERREZ, TWO PARADIGMS OF LIBERATIVE TRANSFORMATION,* New Delhi: Decent Books, 2004, pp. xvi, 284

Suffering is one of the basic enduring problems of humanity. In the past some like Comte and Voltaire blamed it on unfriendly nature. Marxism shifted the responsibility to the inexorable course of history. But in recent times the blame for it has been placed at the door of human greed and many have sought the proper way for liberating humans from the clutches of such meaningless suffering by appealing to the moral sense of both the oppressors and the oppressed. Dr. John Chathanatt picks out for examination two paradigmatic thinkers in this line, Mohandas K. Gandhi, leader of India's freedom struggle against the British rule and Gustavo Gutierrez, the Father of Liberation Theology of Latin America. Though separated by half a century of history and influenced by sharply divergent cultural traditions, both of them advocated the liberative transformation of humans as well as of human institutions. The book is the fruit of the author's doctoral research at the University of Chicago under the guidance of James M. Gustafson and David Tracy. The author explains the theme and the thesis in the first chapter of the book.

Chapter two is a detailed analysis of the basic concepts of the two thinkers. For Gandhi the key words was *swaraj* which had four different meanings, freedom from alien rule, self-government, *moksha* or spiritual liberation from worldly existence and transformation in this life itself. This was closely allied to another term *swadesi,* patriotism, which was the means for the attainment of freedom through *satya,* truth and *ahimsa,* non-violence. Similarly for Gutierrez liberation meant aspiration for freedom, process of humanization, grace and salvation. He distinguishes three levels of liberation, first socio-political, cultural and economic freedom, then specifically human liberation, and finally liberation from sin. While Gandhi's idea of *swaraj* and *moksha* are basically rooted in the Hindu ideal of attaining realization of the identity of *Atman-Braham* Gutierez's central idea is the Christian ideal of God's Kingdom, conversion, the "new event of the poor", a new doing of theology and a new way of being the Church. As active subjects of their own history the exploited poor have to reveal the

totally "Other" by forging towards a radically different society under God's rule.

There is an elaborate discussion of the religious ideas of Gandhi and Gutierrez in the third chapter. What is made clear is that Gandhi, a very religious man, could not be tied down to the framework of any particular religion. He was a syncretist who took over ideas from all religions he came into contact with. His idea of religion was closer to Jainism than to Hinduism. But his basic idea was that there was no other God than Truth "In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth... My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth". Such an idea of God was the basis for his *satyagraha,* clinging to Truth, constant pursuit of what is right and just, a term he preferred to *sadagraha,* clinging to reality, suggested by his nephew. Closely allied to it was *ahimsa,* care not to inflict violence on any one. It is the direct consequence of one's being in truth, than being obligated by any being out there. Gutierrez on the other hand, bases his Liberation Theology entirely on his Christian faith in the divine Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a trinity of communion and love, that is the Godhead... "A living love is an affirmation of God. Belief in God does not mean simply maintaining that he exists. Belief in God means commitment of one's life to him and to all women and men" (*Power of the Poor,* p.59) The author goes on in chapter four to explain how both Gandhi and Gutierrez developed their liberation theories into spiritualities in their own separate ways. For Gandhi it was a spirituality of *ahimsa* leading to *satyagraha,* a political struggle to convince the opponent of the justice of one's cause and to convert him in the process, while for Gutierrez it is the effort to bring out the relation between the historical situation of injustice and oppression and the challenge of following Jesus in the ecclesial community with a preferential option for the poor. .

The goal of liberative transformation, which is the norm for evaluating the two systems is the theme for chapter five. Though Gandhi and Gutierrez start from different foundations and proceed with different methodologies, both of them "envisioned an utopian 'order' where love, peace, justice, communion, freedom and harmony would reign" (p.20). For Gandhi it is *Ramarajya,* the rule of Sri Rama,

while for Gutierrez a Christo-centric spirituality, in which Christ becomes the norm, the law, to judge the adequacy of walking in the life-journey is essential for liberation. But there is a radical difference between the two. According to Gutierrez the basic problem is not the actual relation between individuals, but the centuries old systemic social oppression that dehumanizes the world of human affairs, and nobody feels personally responsible for it. Hence such unjust social structures should be transformed first and foremost. For Gandhi, on the other hand, any transformation has to begin in the heart of the individual with the realization of Truth that the enemy are not individual persons but the wrong action, which can be hated and condemned without hating the individual agents.

According to Chathanatt, Gutierrez's approach is specifically Christian and "to that extent parochial", while though Gandhi is a Hindu he is open to other religious influences. "This gives him a broader platform to speak from and to be spoken to" (p.227). One can question the validity of this conclusion since it is based more on appearances than on a careful evaluation of the two theologies involved. Gandhi's approach is rather impersonal, based on an abstract idea of truth smacking of a political leader's crowd-pleasing programme, taking tasty bits and pieces from every dish of ideology on the market, without any concern for rational consistency. The author himself admits that Gandhi's approach is pragmatic and less than rational. Appealing to the good will of the representatives of a mighty empire that could easily crush any recourse to violent means was the only way for gaining India's independence! Gutierrez dealing with the word of God as a priest and a pastor has a personalist approach. Speaking from a personal experience of how institutional greed exploits helpless human beings through centuries-old impersonal structures, he is affirming the common responsibility of both oppressors and the oppressed alike to pull down such man-made structures that violate the basic law of love, love of God and love of neighbor that should animate the life of the society as a whole and show a preferential option for the poor and the marginalized. It is quite doubtful whether the two systems based on radically different faith traditions and theologies and dealing with totally different political situations can be brought together into any meaningful synthesis.

Pauline Chakkalakal, dsp., *DISCIPLESHIP A SPACE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP, A FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE,* Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 2004, pp. xxi, 393, Rs. 265.00

This is "an examination of the concept of patriarchy in secular society and its adaptation in the form of clericalism in the Church" (p.8) and aims at analysing power relations in the Catholic Church from the point of view of social analysis, feminist hermeneutics of the Bible and theological reflection on the concept and practice of leadership. Originally this was a thesis directed by Dr. K. C. Abraham and approved for doctorate by the Serampore College under South Asia Theological Research Institute. Sr. Pauline is critical of an all-male church governance that keeps women under male domination. Some twenty and three hundred years ago Plato had complained in the *Republic* that by denying women equality with men, humanity had deprived itself of the positive contribution of fifty percent of its members. In Asia patriarchy is not just a matter of male supremacy and male centredness, but a system of social control and domination. Hinduism has actually sacralized it with the ideal of *pativrata,* which according to the author was 'the masterstroke of the Hindu-Aryan genius: "The actual mechanisms and institutions of control over women's sexuality and the subordination of women, were thus completely rendered invisible" (p.28). Just as patriarchy pervades all areas of human life in society, so too Church structures and doctrines control and domesticate Christian women; all decision making and leadership structures are controlled by the male clergy.

On the contrary, the Bible states that God created man and woman as equals (Gen 1:26-27). Jesus rejected grading, forbade elitist claims and banned titles of honour (Mt. 23:2-10). According to Prophet Jeremiah in the new covenant there is equality of all: "There will be no further need for any one to teach... the neighbor or the brother/sister; they will all know me from the least to the greatest" (Jer 31:34). Still, there were many discriminatory passages in the Bible: Jewish law treated a woman as man's property (Ex 20:17). A daughter could have access to her father's property only if there were no male heirs (Num. 27:8). Laws of purification stigmatized women as unclean

during periods of menstruation (Lev 15:19) and child birth (Lev 12:1-5). Especially discriminatory were the words of St. Paul, who at the same time as affirming the equality of Jew and Gentile, male and female commanded that women should cover their heads when at prayer (1 Cor. 11:2-16) "because a husband is supreme over his wife". Of course, St. Paul is talking about the discipline to be observed in the special situation of the church at Corinth. On the whole an unbiased reading of the Bible unfolds the inherent dignity and equality of man and woman. On the other hand, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church like Augustine and Tertullian in general in dealing with women maintain a patriarchal and misogynist mind-set (p.61).

The second chapter is the report of a survey made primarily within the Catholic Church with 353 respondents, regarding various points implied in the present discrimination against women. For example more than 50% of women strongly feel male domination and think that women's education and awareness are the principal means to eliminate gender discrimination. Half of the respondents agree that exclusion of women from ordination has no binding theological character and is based on human and historical reflection of the past. The third chapter presents more Scriptural arguments in favour of the equality of women with men and shows that discipleship of Jesus was open to women as well. It further presents a detailed description of the various movements for women's leadership in Church and society. But the conclusion is rather negative: "The emerging models of women's leadership, though remarkable in themselves, have not made any significant contribution towards structural changes in the Church. In spite of the active involvement of many Christian women within the secular movement for change, the very same women have apparently failed to affect the churches in a significant way" (p.183). The reason for this is the general feeling that as different from the secular society "the women in the Church are not exploited". Those women who do not fit in the present structure "are labeled extremists, subversive, emotional, irrational and even abnormal" (p 184). Of course there are signs of hope since through collective power both on the local and international levels "women are able to challenge structures and assumptions that are discriminatory and harmful to women" (p.185).

The fourth chapter is an appeal to develop further a feminist hermeneutics of Scripture and a feminist theology. Feminism is defined as a movement that challenges patriarchal structures and seeks to provide alternatives for a just society. The fifth chapter presents a model for reconstructing Church Leadership. Leadership is still defined as "power", but not "power over" or domination, but rather "power with" (mutual empowerment) and "power to" (ability to act). All the recent research into the dynamics of leadership are explored and incorporated into this new feminist model. One can ask whether this empowering and transforming aspect of authority is not required in the exercise of all leadership of both women and men. In politics women stepping into the shoes of men often turn out to be greater dictators than Hitler or Stalin.

But the fallacy of the whole book as of all recent feminist theology is the line of reasoning that since men and women are equal before God women have equal right to be ordained priests and bishops in the Church. That all have equal dignity and all baptized share in the sanctifying mission of Christ does not mean that all have to do all things. Equality of dignity does not mean equality of functions. That any man can be ordained a priest or bishop does not mean that those offices have to be assigned by lot. It is the special endowments of an individual that make him suited for a particular job. More than endowments from the divine Spirit, it is the outlook and impression of the community that make some one suited for a particular office. Today historians tell us that offices in the Church of Bishops and Deacons evolved in imitation of the role of Supervisors and Servers in the ordinary household, and that the title 'Priest' was not used in the Church for a long time on account of its association with the Gentile and Judaic priesthood. Bishop of Rome gained authority as Pope over the whole Church not because Christ decreed so, but because the role was imposed on him by concrete historical circumstances. In a world where neither Hindus nor Muslims allow women-priests it will be rather odd for the Catholic Church to ordain women as priests. As for the Bible, which assumes the equality of men and women, women's rights do not come as a particular issue. Or as Natalie K. Watson has argued in a recent book "What authority

can biblical texts which are the patriarchal worldviews have for women?" Picking and choosing certain texts as specially advantageous to women and filling in the silent gaps does real violence to the Biblical texts.

This does not mean, however, that the present social set-up brought about by male domination with its corrupt practice and inequality should remain unchanged. All men and women of goodwill should work together for a radical reform of society. Jesus himself is the fore-. runner and example par excellence of effecting such a societal change. But his later followers failed him.

K. B. Sitaramayya, *THE MARVEL AND THE MYSTERY OF PAIN, A NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK OF JOB,* Bangalore: MCC Publications, 2001

As Theodore M. Swanson states in the preface to the book *the Book of Job* is very suitable for interpretation on a multi-religious perspective. Though part of the Hebrew Bible, its setting is not Israel, and the typical themes of Judaism like election, covenant and the gift of the land do not occur in it. Nor has it to do with anything specific to Christianity. Sitaramayya who taught the book for several years in a Christian college, and wrote a series of articles on it in *Mother India,* the official organ of the Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, finds a great similarity in the approach to the problem of suffering between Job, the central character of the book and Arjuna, the hero of the *Bhagavad Gita.* For both suffering is not a punishment for anything wrongly done but an invitation to ascend higher. Passing through several psychological stages both end with a vision of God and his purpose regarding man. The action of both books is the drama enacted by the Lord himself, a divine comedy in the truest sense of the term, since God himself is the stage manager.

The Marvel and Mystery of Pain, a title taken from Sri Aurobindo, is a full length commentary of the Book of Job, faithfully following the principles of Biblical criticism on the one hand and the Hindu method of Scriptural interpretation, on the other. The author consulted a number of specialists on Old Testament and attended a course on the Book of Job in a Catholic Seminary. Following T. S. Eliot's reference in his *Wasteland* to Prajapati's triple Da-advice to humans, demons and gods, the author also holds that "if the Book of Job like any other sacred text means many things to many people it is as it should be". The Hindu tradition has several specific points to add to the Biblical tradition. Such are for example Arjuna's ideal of perfection through the fulfillment of his duties over and above his sattvic nature, his evolution made possible by the Lord appearing in human form, and the cadence and charm of the many unusual words in the Book of Job far from being an outer embellishment would be a means of communicating experience that is often beyond words. Finally the

basic ignorance of even a sattvic mind regarding God is removed only by the direct experience of the Universal Form or *visvarupa* of the Lord. The final restoration of Job to happy life of one hundred and seventy years was not mere distributive justice in the Judaic sense, but a life on a totally different plane: God had made him lose and suffer only for the particular purpose of evolving him.

Since most books of the Bible are not thematic and ideological statements of a particular religion, but the response to actual situations in the light of God-given faith such multi-religious commentaries can be very helpful to make the message fuller and more intelligible to all human beings whose common heritage they are.

Avito Pottukalam, *FULLNESS OF LIFE, FREEING MISSIONS FROM NEW THEOLOGIES, WITH A NEW CONVERSION MOTIVE,* Delhi: Media House, 2004, pp. 167.

The book is a strong attack against the new theology, which affirms the relevance also of non-Christian religions for human salvation, the limitations of a Church conditioned by history and culture and the need for inter-religious dialogue. What the author wants to affirm is his unwavering faith that Jesus Christ is the unique and universal Savior of mankind. He thinks that the statement of Vatican II *Lumen Gentium #* 16 about the possibility of salvation outside the Church "had a tremendous impact on mission work, adversely affecting the same" (p.28). According to him it is only a *possibility* for salvation, indicating an "extraordinary means" working in the case of a few individuals like Mahatma Gandhi, while baptism and membership in the Church remains the ordinary means: "Christ who built his Church on the rock of Peter, wanted that it be the ordinary way of salvation". Fr. Avito feels that while great many became saints in the pre-Vatican II Church taking the words of Scripture in their literal sense, the advent of scientific interpretation of the Bible has created confusion in the minds of the educated Christian readers. Many have left the mission field altogether. That priests and religious in greater numbers engage not in direct preaching of the Gospel but in conducting English medium

schools catering more to the rich, who do not care for the poor, is another reason for the decline of mission.

There is no doubt that some of the author's complaints about the way the work of evangelization proceeds today like the deployment of personnel in different areas of apostolate and the easy declaration of the equality of all religions may have some substance in them. But as Bishop Cheriankunnel who wrote a foreword to the book remarks, his "stand on inter-religious dialogue is not justified", since Pope John Paul II himself set at Assisi the good example for it. If there is only one divine plan for human salvation, the world religions, which cater to more than two thirds of humanity, should be seen as part of that plan. That does not mean that all religions are equal or say the same thing; though they all try to interpret the faith which is God's free gift to all his children. Christian mission is not against other religions but in collaboration with them to fulfill God's plan to bring creation to its natural fulfillment. As the same Foreword says, "some of the expressions such as 'aggressive proclamation' and proselytism used by the author offend the readers" (p.10). That "all major religions advocate propagating themselves" is no reason for the Kingdom of God's rule which the Incarnation inaugurated should follow the same militant outlook. The Bible itself as the word of God in the words of man should be seen as couched in a historically conditioned world view and language modes dependent on a particular context. Following the literal sense of the texts without taking into account their actual contexts would be doing injustice to divine revelation itself. That some one should write such a book almost half a century after Vatican II only goes to show that the new horizon for mission work set by the Council as well as its message and outlook are not yet fully understood by the spokesmen for the work of evangelization! There is need for careful study to make clear what the Christian mission is all about. While one cannot go back to the colonialist ideal of conquering the world for Christ, the relation between the different Christian churches and different religions in catering to the same people needs greater clarity.

John B. Chethimattam